THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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Editor of "The Expositor"

AUTHORIZED EDITION, COMPLETE
AND UNABRIDGED
BOUND IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

NEW YORK
A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON
3 and 5 West Eighteenth Street
London: Hodder and Stoughton
1903

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I. PAGE

THE HIGHER CRITICISM 3

CHAPTER II.

THE BOOKS OF KINGS 14

CHAPTER III.

THE HISTORIAN OF THE KINGS 30

CHAPTER IV.

GOD IN HISTORY 39

CHAPTER V.

HISTORY WITH A PURPOSE 46

CHAPTER VI.

LESSONS OF THE HISTORY 50

BOOK II.

DAVID AND SOLOMON.

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

DAVID'S DECREPITUDE 61
1 KINGS i. 1-4.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EASTERN COURT AND HOME 70
1 KINGS i.

CHAPTER IX.

ADONIJAH'S REBELLION 81
1 KINGS i. 5-53.

CHAPTER X.

DAVID'S DEATH-BED 94
1 KINGS ii. 1-11.

CHAPTER XI.

AVENGING JUSTICE 105
1 KINGS ii. 13-46.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOY-KING'S WISDOM 120
1 KINGS iii. 5-28.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOLOMON'S COURT AND KINGDOM 134
1 KINGS iv. 1-34.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TEMPLE 149
1 KINGS v., vi., vii.

CHAPTER XV.

PAGE

THE IDEAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE . . . 172
1 KINGS vii. 13-51; viii. 12-61.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARK AND THE CHERUBIM 177
1 KINGS vi. 23-30; viii. 6-11.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GRADUAL GROWTH OF THE LEVITIC RITUAL . 186
1 KINGS viii. 1-66.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TEMPLE WORSHIP 193
1 KINGS viii. 1-11.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TEMPLE SACRIFICES 202
1 KINGS viii. 62-66; ix. 25.

CHAPTER XX.

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY 222
1 KINGS x. 1-29.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOLLOW PROSPERITY 230
1 KINGS xi.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD AGE OF SOLOMON 239
1 KINGS xi. 1-13.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WIND AND THE WHIRLWIND 250
1 KINGS xi. 14-41.

BOOK III.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM.

B.C. 937—889.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAGE

A NEW REIGN. B.C. 937 269

1 KINGS xii. 1-5.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DISRUPTION 275

1 KINGS xii. 6-20.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"JEROBOAM THE SON OF NEBAT, WHO MADE ISRAEL TO SIN." B.C. 937—915 286

1 KINGS xii. 21-23.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JEROBOAM, AND THE MAN OF GOD 296

1 KINGS xiii. 1-34.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOOM OF THE HOUSE OF NEBAT 302

1 KINGS xiv. 1-20.

CHAPTER XXIX.

NADAB; BAASHA; ELAH. B.C. 915—889 . . . 309

1 KINGS xv. 25; xvi. 10.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE EARLIER KINGS OF JUDAH. B.C. 937—851 . 313

1 KINGS xiv. 21-31; xv. 1-24.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JEHOSHAPHAT. B.C. 876—851 327

1 KINGS xxii. 41-50.

CHAPTER XXXII. PAGE

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL FROM ZIMRI TO AHAB. B.C. 889—877 337

1 KINGS xvi. 11-34.

BOOK IV.

AHAB AND ELIJAH.

B.C. 877—855.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

KING AHAB AND QUEEN JEZEBEL 347

1 KINGS xvi. 29-34.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ELIJAH 357

1 KINGS xvii. 1-7.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ELIJAH AT SAREPTA 372

1 KINGS xvii. 7—xviii. 19.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ELIJAH AND AHAB 377

1 KINGS xviii. 1-20.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL 383

1 KINGS xviii. 20-40.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RAIN 399

1 KINGS xviii. 41-46.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ELIJAH'S FLIGHT 404

1 KINGS xix. 1-4.

CHAPTER XL.

PAGE

ELIJAH'S DESPAIR 415
1 KINGS xix. 1-10.

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW GOD DEALS WITH DESPONDENCY . . . 424
1 KINGS xix. 5-8.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE THEOPHANY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE . . . 429
1 KINGS xix. 9-18.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CALL OF ELISHA 445
1 KINGS xix. 19-21.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AHAB AND BENHADAD 450
1 KINGS xx. 1-30.

CHAPTER XLV.

AHAB'S INFATUATION 463
1 KINGS xx. 31-43.

CHAPTER XLVI.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD 473
1 KINGS xxi. 1-29.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ALONE AGAINST THE WORLD 485
1 KINGS xxii. 1-40.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CONCLUSION 497

APPENDIX.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS . . 500

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BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION.

"Ich bin überzeugt, dass die Bibel immer schöner wird, je mehr man sie versteht, d.h. je mehr man einsieht und anschaut, dass jedes Wort, das wir allgemein auffassen und in Besondern auf uns anwenden, nach gewissen Umständen, nach Zeit- und Orts-verhältnissen einen, eigenen, besondern, unmittelbar individuellen Bezug gehabt hat."—GOETHE.

"Es bleibt dabei, das beste Lesen der Bibel, dieses Göttlichen Buchs, ist *menschlich*. Ich nehme dies Wort im weitesten Umfang und in der andringendsten Bedeutung. Menschlich muss man die Bibel lesen: denn sie ist ein Buch durch Menschen für Menschen geschrieben; menschlich ist die Sprache, menschlich die äussern Hülfsmittel, mit denen sie geschrieben und aufbehalten ist. . . . Es darf also sicher geglaubt werden: je humaner (im besten Sinn des Worts) man das Wort Gottes liest, desto näher kommt man dem Zweck seines Urhebers, welcher Menschen zu seinem Bilde schuf . . . und für uns menschlich handelt."—HERDER.

CHAPTER I.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

"God shows all things in the slow history of their ripening."—GEORGE ELIOT.

GOD has given us many Bibles. The book which we call the Bible consists of a series of books, and its name represents the Greek plural *τὰ Βίβλια*. It is not so much a book, as the extant fragments of a literature, which grew up during many centuries. Supreme as is the importance of this "Book of God," it was never meant to be the sole teacher of mankind. We mistake its purpose, we misapply its revelation, when we use it to exclude the other sources of religious knowledge. It is supremely profitable for our instruction, but, so far from being designed to absorb our exclusive attention, its work is to stimulate the eagerness with which, by its aid, we are able to learn from all other sources the will of God towards men.

God speaks to us in many voices. In the Bible He revealed Himself to all mankind by His messages to the individual souls of some of His servants. But those messages, whether uttered or consigned to writing, were but one method of enabling us to hold communion with Him. They were not even an *indispensable* method. Thousands of the saints of God lived the spiritual life in close communion with their Father in

heaven in ages which possessed no written book; in ages before any such book existed; in ages during which, though it existed, it was practically inaccessible; in ages during which it had been designedly kept out of their hands by priests. This fact should quicken our sense of gratitude for the inestimable boon of a Book wherein he who runs may now read, and respecting the main teaching of which wayfaring men, and even fools, need not err. But it should at the same time save us from the error of treating the Bible as though it were in itself an amulet or a fetish, as the Mohammedan treats his Koran. The Bible was written in human language, by men for men. It was written mainly in Judæa, by Jews, for Jews. "*Scripture*," as the old theological rule said, "*is the sense of Scripture*,"[1] and the sense of Scripture can only be ascertained by the methods of study and the rules of criticism without which no ancient document or literature can be even approximately understood. In these respects the Bible cannot be arbitrarily or exceptionally treated. No *a priori* rules can be devised for its elucidation. It is what it is, not what we might have expected it to be. Language, at the best, is an imperfect and ever-varying instrument of thought. It is full of twilight, and of gracious shadows. Vast numbers of its words were originally metaphorical. When the light of metaphor has faded from them they come to mean different things at different times, under different conditions, in different contexts, on different lips. Language can at the best be but an *asymptote* to thought; in other words, it resembles the mathematical line which approaches nearer and nearer to the circumference of

[1] "Scriptura est sensus Scripturæ."—St. Augustine.

a circle, but which, even when infinitely extended, can never actually touch it. The fact that the Bible contains a Divine revelation does not alter the fact that it represents a nation's literature. It is the library of the Jewish people, or rather all that remains to us of that library, and all that was most precious in it. Holy men of old were moved by the Spirit of God, but as this Divine inspiration did not make them personally sinless in their actions, or infallible in their judgments, so neither does it exempt their messages from the limitation which attaches to all human conditions. Criticism would have rendered an inestimable service to every thoughtful reader of the Scriptures if it had done nothing more than impress upon them that the component books are not one, but complex and multiform, separated from each other by centuries of time, and of very varying value and preciousness. They too, like the greatest apostles of God, have their treasure in earthen vessels; and we not only may, but must, by the aid of that reason which is "the candle of the Lord," estimate both the value of the treasure, and the age and character of the earthen vessel in which it is contained.

There are hundreds of texts in Scripture which may convey to some souls a very true and blessed meaning, but which do not in the original possess any such meaning as that which is now attached to them. The words of Hebrew prophets often seem perfectly clear, but in some cases they had another set of connotations in the mouths of those by whom they were originally spoken. It requires a learned and a literary training to discover by philology, by history, or by comparison, what alone they could have meant when they were first spoken. In many cases their exact significance is

no longer to be ascertained with certainty. It must be more or less conjectural. There are passages of Scripture which have received scores of differing interpretations. There are entire books of Scripture about the general scope of which there have been diametrically opposite opinions. The spiritual intuition of the saint may in some instances be keener to read aright than the laborious researches of the scholar, because spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned. But in general it is true that the *ex cathedra* assertions of ignorant readers, though they are often pronounced with an assumption of infallibility, are not worth the breath which utters them. All artificial dogmas as to what Scripture *must* be, and *must* mean, are worse than idle; we have only to deal with what it *really is*, and what it *really says*. Even when opinions respecting it have been all but unanimously pronounced by the representatives of all the Churches, they have nevertheless been again and again shown to be absurdly erroneous. The slow light of scholarship, of criticism, of comparative religion, has proved that in many instances not only the interpretations of former ages, but the very *principles* of interpretation from which they were derived, had no basis whatever in fact. And the methods of interpretation—dogmatic, ecclesiastical, mystic, allegorical, literal—have changed from age to age.[1] The asserted heresy of yesterday has in scores of instances become the accepted commonplace of to-morrow. The duty of the Church in the present day is neither to make out that the Bible is what men have imagined that it was, nor to repeat the assertions of ancient writers as to what they declared it to be, but honestly

[1] For a decisive proof of these statements I refer to my Bampton Lectures on the *History of Interpretation* (Macmillan, 1890).

and truthfully to discover the significance of the actual phenomena which it presents to the enlightened and cultivated intelligence.

If it were not so common a failing to ignore the lessons of the past, it might have been hoped that a certain modesty, of which the necessity is taught us by centuries of error, would have saved a multitude of writers from rushing into premature and denunciative rejection of results which they have not studied, and of which they are incapable to judge. St. Jerome complained that in his day there was no old woman so fatuous as not to assume the right to lay down the law about Scriptural interpretation. It is just the same in these days. Half-taught dogmatists—*αὐτοσχέδιοι δογματισταὶ*, as they have been called—may sweepingly condemn the lifelong researches of men far superior to themselves, not only in learning, but in love of truth; they may attribute their conclusions to faithless infatuation, and even to moral obliquity. This has been done over and over again in our own lifetime; and yet such self-constituted and unauthorised defenders of their own prejudices and traditions—which they always identify with the Catholic faith—are impotent to prevent, impotent even greatly to retard, the spread of real knowledge. Many of the now-accepted certainties of science were repudiated a generation ago as absurd and blasphemous. As long as it was possible to put them down by persecution, the thumbscrew and the stake were freely used by priests and inquisitors for their suppression. *E pur si muove.* Theologians who mingled the gold of Revelation with the clay of their own opinions have been driven to correct their past errors. Untaught by experience, religious prejudice is ever heaping up fresh obstacles to oppose the progress

of new truths. The obstacles will be swept away in the future as surely as they have been in the past. The eagle, it has been said, which soars through the air does not worry itself how to cross the rivers.

It is probable that no age since that of the Apostles has added so much to our knowledge of the true meaning and history of the Bible as has been added by our own. The mode of regarding Scripture has been almost revolutionised, and in consequence many books of Scripture previously misunderstood have acquired a reality and intensity of interest and instructiveness which have rendered them trebly precious. A deeper and holier reverence for all eternal truth which the Bible contains has taken the place of a meaningless letter worship. The fatal and wooden Rabbinic dogma of verbal dictation—a dogma which either destroys intelligent faith altogether, or introduces into Christian conduct some of the worst delusions of false religion—is dead and buried in every capable and well-taught mind. Truths which had long been seen through the distorting mirage of false exegesis have now been set forth in their true aspect. We have been enabled, for the first time, to grasp the real character of events which, by being set in a wrong perspective, had been made so fantastic as to have no relation to ordinary lives. Figures which had become dim spectres moving through an unnatural atmosphere now stand out, full of grace, instructiveness and warning, in the clear light of day. The science of Biblical criticism has solved scores of enigmas which were once disastrously obscure, and has brought out the original beauty of some passages, which, even in our Authorised Version, conveyed no intelligible meaning to earnest readers. The Revised Version alone has corrected

hundreds of inaccuracies which in some instances defaced the beauty of the sacred page, and in many others misrepresented and mistranslated it. Intolerance has been robbed of favourite shibboleths, used as the basis of cruel beliefs, which souls unhardened by system could only repudiate with a "God forbid!" Familiar error has ever been dearer to most men than unfamiliar truths; but truth, however slow may seem to be the beat of her pinions, always wins her way at last.

> "Thro' the heather an' howe gaed the creepin' thing,
> But abune was the waft of an angel's wing."

Can there be any doubt that mankind has everything to gain and nothing to lose from the ascertainment of genuine truth? Are we so wholly devoid of even an elementary faith as to think that man can profit by consciously cherished illusions? Does it not show a nobler confidence in facts to correct traditional prejudices, than to rest blindly content with conventional assertions? If we do not believe that God is a God of truth, that all falsity is hateful to Him,—and religious falsity most hateful of all, because it adds the sin of hypocrisy to the love of lies,—we believe in *nothing*. If our religion is to consist in a rejection of knowledge, lest it should disturb the convictions of times of ignorance, the dicta of "the Fathers," or dogmas which arrogate to themselves the sham claim of Catholicity—if we are to give only to the Dark Ages the title of the Ages of Faith, then indeed

> "The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble."

"There is and will be much discussion," says Goethe, "as to the advantage or disadvantage of the popular dissemination of the Bible. To me it is clear that it

will be mischievous, as it always has been, if used dogmatically and capriciously; beneficial, as it always has been, if accepted didactically (for our instruction) and with feeling." There is abundance in the Bible for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;—we shall weaken its moral and spiritual force, and gain nothing in its place, if we turn it into an idol adorned with impossible claims which it never makes for itself, and if we support its golden image upon the brittle clay of an exegesis which is morally, critically, and historically false.

I do not see how there can be any loss in the positive results of what is called the Higher Criticism. Certainly its suggestions must never be hastily adopted. Nor is it likely that they will be. They have to fight their way through crowds of opposing prejudices. They are first held up to ridicule as absurd; then exposed to anathema as irreligious; at last they are accepted as obviously true. The very theologians who once denounced them silently ignore or readjust what they previously preached, and hasten, first to minimise the importance, then to extol the value of the new discoveries. It is quite right that they should be keenly scrutinised. All new sciences are liable to rush into extremes. Their first discoverers are misled into error by premature generalisations born of a genuine enthusiasm. They are tempted to build elaborate superstructures on inadequate foundations. But when they have established certain irrefragable principles, can the obvious deductions from those principles be other than a pure gain? Can we be the better for traditional delusions? Can mistakes and ignorance—can anything but the ascertained fact—be desirable for man, or acceptable to God?

No doubt it is with a sensation of pain that we are compelled to give up convictions which we once regarded as indubitable and sacred. That is a part of our human nature. We must say with all gentleness to the passionate devotees of each old erroneous *mumpsimus*—

> "Disce; sed ira cadat naso rugosaque sanna
> Cum veteres avias tibi de pulmone revello."

Our blessed Lord, with His consummate tenderness, and Divine insight into the frailties of our nature, made tolerant allowance for inveterate prejudices. "No man," He said, "having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is good." But the pain of disillusionment is blessed and healing when it is incurred in the cause of sincerity. There must always be more value in results earned by heroic labour than in conventions accepted without serious inquiry. Already there has been a silent revolution. Many of the old opinions about the Bible have been greatly modified. There is scarcely a single competent scholar who does not now admit that the Hexateuch is a composite structure; that much of the Levitical legislation, which was once called Mosaic, is in reality an aftergrowth which *in its present form* is not earlier than the days of the prophet Ezekiel; that the Book of Deuteronomy belongs, in its present form, whatever older elements it may contain, to the era of Hezekiah's or Josiah's reformation; that the Books of Zechariah and Isaiah are not homogeneous, but preserve the writings of more prophets than their titles imply; that only a small section of the Psalter was the work of David; that the Book of Ecclesiastes was not the work of King Solomon; that most of the Book of Daniel

belongs to the era of Antiochus Epiphanes; and so forth. In what respect is the Bible less precious, less "inspired" in the only tenable sense of that very undefined word, in consequence of such discoveries? In what way do they touch the outermost fringe of our Christian faith? Is there anything in such results of modern criticism which militates against the most inferential expansion of a single clause in the Apostolic, the Nicene, or even the Athanasian Creed? Do they contravene one single syllable of the hundreds of propositions to which our assent is demanded in the Thirty-nine Articles? I would gladly help to mitigate the needless anxiety felt by many religious minds. When the Higher Criticism is in question I would ask them to distinguish between established premisses and the exorbitant system of inferences which a few writers have based upon them. They may rest assured that sweeping conclusions will not be hastily snatched up; that no conclusion will be regarded as proved until it has successfully run the gauntlet of many a jealous challenge. They need not fear for one moment that the Ark of their faith is in peril, and they will be guilty not only of unwisdom but of profanity if they rush forward to support it with rude and unauthorised hands. There never has been an age of deep thought and earnest inquiry which has not left its mark in the modification of some traditions or doctrines of theology. But the truths of essential Christianity are built upon a rock. They belong to things which cannot be shaken, and which remain. The intense labours of eminent scholars, English and German, thanklessly as they have been received, have not robbed us of so much as a fraction of a single precious element of revelation. On the contrary, they

have cleared the Bible of many accretions by which its meaning was spoilt, and its doctrines wrested to perdition, and they have thus rendered it more profitable than before for every purpose for which it was designed, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

When we study the Bible it is surely one of our most primary duties to beware lest any idols of the caverns or of the forum tempt us "to offer to the God of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie."[1]

[1] Bacon.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOOKS OF KINGS.

THE "Two Books of Kings," as we call them, are only one book (Sepher Melakîm), and were so regarded not only in the days of Origen (*ap.* Euseb., *H. E.*, vi. 25) and of Jerome (A.D. 420), but by the Jews even down to Bomberg's Hebrew Bible of 1518. They are treated as one book in the Talmud and the Peshito. The Western Bibles followed the Alexandrian division into two books (called the third and fourth of Kings), and Jerome adopted this division in the Vulgate (*Regum*, iii. et iv.). But if this separation into two books was due to the LXX. translators, they should have made a less awkward and artificial division than the one which breaks off the first book in the middle of the brief reign of Ahaziah. Jerome's version of the Books of Samuel and Kings appeared first of his translations, and in his famous *Prologus Galeatus* he mentions these facts.

The History was intended to be a continuation of the Books of Samuel. Some critics, and among them Ewald, assign them to the same author, but closer examination of the Book of Kings renders this more than doubtful. The incessant use of the prefix "King," the extreme frequency of the description "Man of God," the references to the law, and above all the

constant condemnation of high places, counterbalance the minor resemblance of style, and prove a difference of authorship.

What has the Higher Criticism, as represented in historic sequence by such writers as Vatke, de Wette, Reuss, Graf, Ewald, Kuenen, Bleek, Wellhausen, Stade, Kittel, Renan, Klostermann, Cheyne, Driver, Robertson Smith, and others, to tell us about the structure and historic credibility of the Books of Kings? Has it in any way shaken their value, while it has undoubtedly added to their intelligibility and interest?

1. It emphasises the fact that they are a compilation. In this there is nothing either new or startling, for the fact is plainly and repeatedly acknowledged in the page of the sacred narrative. The sources utilised are:—

(1) The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 41).

(2) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (referred to fifteen times).

(3) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (referred to seventeen times).[1]

By comparing the authority referred to in 1 Kings xi. 41 with those quoted in 2 Chron. ix. 29, we see that "the Book of the Acts of Solomon" must have been to a large extent identical with the annals of that king's reign contained in "the Book (R.V., Histories) of Nathan the Prophet," the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and "the story (R.V., commentary) or visions of Iddo the Seer."[2] Similarly it appears that

[1] How closely these documents are transcribed is shown by the recurrence of "*unto this day*," though the phrase had long ceased to be true when the book appeared.

[2] It is inferred from 1 Kings viii. 12, 13, which have a poetic tinge, and to which the LXX. add "Behold they are written in the Book of

the Acts of Rehoboam, Abijam, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, were compiled, at any rate in part, from the histories of Shemaiah, Jehu the son of Hanani,[1] Isaiah the son of Amoz, Hozai (2 Chron. xxxiii. 18, R.V.), and other seers. In the narrative of a history of 450 years (from B.C. 1016 to 562) the writer was of course compelled to rely for his facts upon more ancient authorities. Whether he consulted the original documents in the archives of Jerusalem, or whether he utilised some outline of them which had previously been drawn up, cannot easily be determined. The work would have been impossible but for the existence of the officials known as recorders and historiographers (*Mazkirim*, *Sopherim*), who first make their appearance in the court of David. But the *original* documents could hardly have survived the ravages of Shalmanezer in Samaria and of Nebuchadnezzar in Jerusalem, so that Movers is probably right in the conjecture that the author's extracts were made, not immediately, but from the epitome of an earlier compiler.[2]

2. Although no direct quotations are referred to other documents, it seems certain from the style, and from various minor touches, that the compiler also utilised

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the Song," that in this section the "Book of Jashar" has been utilised, and that the reading הישר has been confused with השיר (Driver, p. 182).

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 34, R.V., "The history of Jehu, the son of Hanani, which *is inserted in the Book of the Kings of Israel*" (not "who is mentioned," A.V., which, however, gives in the margin the literal meaning "was made to ascend").

[2] Movers, *Krit. Untersuch.*, p. 185 (Bonn, 1836). The use of older documents explains the phrase "till this day," and the passages which speak of the Temple as still standing (1 Kings viii. 8, ix. 21, xii. 19; 2 Kings x. 27, xiii. 23). Sometimes the traces of earlier and later date are curiously juxtaposed, as in 2 Kings xvii. 18, 21 and 19, 20.

detailed accounts of great prophets like Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah son of Imlah, which had been drawn up by literary students in the Schools of the Prophets. The stories of prophets and men of God who are left unnamed were derived from oral traditions so old that the names had been forgotten before they had been committed to writing.[1]

3. The work of the compiler himself is easily traceable. It is seen in the constantly recurring formulæ, which come almost like the refrain of an epic poem, at the accession and close of every reign.

They run normally as follows. For the Kings of Judah:—

"And in the . . . year of . . . King of Israel reigned . . . over Judah." "And . . . years he reigned in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was . . the daughter of . . . . And . . . did that which was { right / evil } in the sight of the Lord."

"And . . . slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. And . . . his son reigned in his stead." In the formulæ for the Kings of Israel "*slept with his fathers*" is omitted when the king was murdered; and "*was buried with his fathers*" is omitted because there was no unbroken dynasty and no royal burial-place. The prominent and frequent mention of the queen-mother is due to the fact that as *Gebira* she held a far higher rank than the favourite wife.

4. To the compiler is also due the moral aspect given

[1] Difference of sources is marked by the different designations of the months, which are called sometimes by their numbers, as in the Priestly Codex (1 Kings xii. 32, 33), sometimes by the old Hebrew names Zif ("*blossom*," April, May, 1 Kings vi. 1), Ethanim ("*fruit*," Sept., Oct., 1 Kings viii. 2), and Bul ("*rain*," 1 Kings vi. 38).

to the annals and other documents which he utilised. Something of this religious colouring he doubtless found in the prophetic histories which he consulted; and the unity of aim visible throughout the book is due to the fact that his standpoint is identical with theirs. Thus, in spite of its compilation from different sources, the book bears the impress of one hand and of one mind. Sometimes a passing touch in an earlier narrative shows the work of an editor after the Exile, as when in the story of Solomon (1 Kings iv. 20-26) we read, "And he had dominion over all the region *on the other side of the river*," *i.e.*, west of the Euphrates, exactly as in Ezra iv. 10. Here the rendering of the A.V., "on this side the river," is certainly inaccurate, and is surprisingly retained in the R.V. also.[1]

5. To this high moral purpose everything else is subordinated. Like all his Jewish contemporaries, the writer attaches small importance to accurate chronological data. He pays little attention to discrepancies, and does not care in every instance to harmonise his own authorities.[2] Some contradictions may be due to additions made in a later recension,[3] and some may have arisen from the introduction of marginal glosses,[4] or from corruptions of the text which (apart from a miraculous supervision such as was not exercised)

[1] מִזֶּה־הַנָּהָר (compare עֲבֶר־נַהֲרָה). *Lit.*, "*Beyond* the river," *i.e.*, from the Persian standpoint. It becomes a fixed geographical phrase. Traces of the editor's hand occur in 1 Kings xiii. 32 ("the cities of Samaria"); 2 Kings xiii. 23 ("as yet").

[2] Comp. 2 Kings viii. 25 with ix. 29.

[3] See 2 Kings xv. 30 and 33, viii. 25 and ix. 29.

[4] As, perhaps, the clause "In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah" in 1 Kings xvi. 23; and the much more serious "in the 480th year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt," which are omitted by Origen (*comm. in Johannem*, ii. 20),

might easily, and indeed would inevitably, occur in the constant transcription of numerical letters closely resembling each other. "The numbers as they have come down to us in the Book of Kings," says Canon Rawlinson, "are untrustworthy, being in part self-contradictory, in part opposed to other Scriptural notices, in part improbable, if not impossible."[1]

6. The date of the book as it stands was *after* B.C. 542, for the last event mentioned in it is the mercy extended by Evil-merodach, King of Babylon, to his unfortunate prisoner Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxv. 27) in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity. The language—later than that of Isaiah, and earlier than that of Ezra—confirms this conclusion. That the book appeared before B.C. 536 is clear from the fact that the compiler makes no allusion to Zerubbabel, Jeshua, or the first exiles who returned to Jerusalem after the decree of Cyrus. But it is generally agreed that the book was *substantially* complete before the Exile (about B.C. 600), though some exilic additions may have been made by a later editor.[2] "The writer was already removed by at least six hundred years from the days of Samuel, a space of time as long as that which separates us from the first Parliament of Edward I."

This date of the book—which cannot but have some bearing on its historic value—is admitted by all, since the peculiarities of the language from the beginning to

and create many difficulties. The only narratives which critics have suggested as possible interpolations, from the occurrence of unusual grammatical forms, are 2 Kings viii. 1-6 and iv. 1-37 (in the story of Elisha); but these forms are perhaps northern provincialisms.

[1] *Speaker's Commentary*, ii. 475. Instances will be found in 1 Kings xiv. 21, xvi. 23, 29; 2 Kings iii. 1, xiii. 10, xv. 1, 30, 33, xiv. 23, xvi. xvii. 1, xviii. 2.

[2] Stade, p. 79; Kalisch, *Exodus*, p. 495.

the end are marked by the usages of later Hebrew.[1] The chronicler lived some two centuries later "in about the same chronological relation to David as Professor Freeman stands to William Rufus."[2]

7. Criticism cannot furnish us with the name of this great compiler.[3] Jewish tradition, as preserved in the Talmud,[4] assigned the Books of Kings to the prophet Jeremiah, and in the Jewish canon they are reckoned among "the earlier prophets." This would account for the strange silence about Jeremiah in the Second Book of Kings, whereas he is prominently mentioned in the Book of Chronicles, in the Apocrypha, and in Josephus. But unless we accept the late and worthless Jewish assertion that, after being carried to Egypt by Johanan, son of Kareah (Jer. xlii. 6, 7), Jeremiah escaped to Babylon,[5] he could not have been the author of the last section of the book (2 Kings xxv. 27-30).[6] Yet it is precisely in the closing chapters of the second book (in and after chap. xvii.) that the resemblances to the style of Jeremiah are most marked.[7] That the writer was a *contemporary* of that prophet, was closely

[1] See Keil, pp. 9, 10.

[2] R. F. Horton, *Inspiration*, p. 843.

[3] He was not the author of the Book of Samuel, for the standpoint and style are quite different. In the First and Second Books of Samuel the high places are never condemned, as they are incessantly in Kings (1 Kings iii. 2, xiii. 32, xiv. 23, xv. 14, xxii. 43, etc.).

[4] Baba Bathra, 15 a.

[5] *Seder Olam Rabba*, 20.

[6] Even then he would have been ninety years old.

[7] There are, however, some *differences* between 2 Kings xxv. and Jer. lii. (see Keil, p. 12), though the manner is the same, Carpzov, *Introd.*, i. 262-64 (Hävernick, *Einleit.*, ii. 171). Jer. li. (verse 64) ends with "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah," excluding him from the authorship of chap. lii. (Driver, *Introd.*, p. 109). The last chapter of Jeremiah was perhaps added to his volume by a later editor.

akin to him in his religious attitude, and was filled with the same melancholy feelings, is plain; but this, as recent critics have pointed out, is due to the fact that both writers reflect the opinions and the phraseology which we find in the Book of Deuteronomy.

8. The critics who are so often charged with rash assumptions have been led to the conclusions which they adopt by intense and infinite labour, including the examination of various books of Scripture phrase by phrase, and even word by word. The sum total of their most important results as regards the Books of Kings is as follows:—

i. The books are composed of older materials, retouched, sometimes expanded, and set in a suitable framework, mostly by a single author who writes throughout in the same characteristic phraseology, and judges the actions and characters of the kings from the standpoint of later centuries. The annals which he consulted, and in part incorporated, were twofold—prophetic and political. The latter were probably drawn up for each reign by the official recorder (מַזְכִּיר), who held an important place in the courts of all the greatest kings (2 Sam. viii. 16, xx. 24; 1 Kings iv. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18), and whose duty it was to write the "acts" or "words" of the "days" of his sovereign (דברי הימים).

ii. The compiler's work is partly of the nature of an epitome,[1] and partly consists of longer narratives, of

[1] "The Old Testament does not furnish a history of Israel, though it supplies the materials from which such a history can be constructed. For example, the narrative of Kings gives but the merest outline of the events that preceded the fall of Samaria. To understand the inner history of the time we must fill up this outline with the aid of the prophets Amos and Hoshea."—ROBERTSON SMITH'S *Preface* to translation of Wellhausen, p. vii.

which we can sometimes trace the Northern Israelitish origin by peculiarities of form and expression.

iii. The synchronisms which he gives between the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah are computed by himself, or by some redactor, and only in round numbers.

iv. The speeches, prayers, and prophecies introduced are perhaps based on tradition, but, since they reflect all the peculiarities of the compiler, must owe their ultimate form to him. This accounts for the fact that the earlier prophecies recorded in these books resemble the tone and style of Jeremiah, but do not resemble such ancient prophecies as those of Amos and Hoshea.

v. The numbers which he adopts are sometimes so enormous as to be grossly improbable; and in these, as in some of the dates, allowance must be made for possible errors of tradition and transcription.

vi. "Deuteronomy," says Professor Driver, "is the standard by which the compiler judges both men and actions; and the history from the beginning of Solomon's reign is presented, not in a purely 'objective' form (as *e.g.* in 2 Sam. ix.-xx.), but from the point of view of the Deuteronomic code.[1] The principles which, in his view, the history as a whole is to exemplify, are already expressed succinctly in the

[1] "In der Chronik," on the other hand, "ist es der Pentateuch, d.h. vor Allem der *Priestercodex*, nach dessen Muster die Geschichte des alten Israels dargestellt wird" (Wellhausen, *Prolegom.*, p. 309). It has been said that the Book of Kings reflects the political and prophetic view, and the Book of Chronicles the priestly view of Jewish history. It is about the Pentateuch, its date and composition, that the battle of the Higher Criticism chiefly rages. With that we are but indirectly concerned in considering the Book of Kings; but it is noticeable that the ablest and most competent defender of the more conservative criticism, Professor James Robertson, D.D., both in his contribution to *Book by Book* and in his *Early Religion of Israel*,

charge which he represents David as giving to his son Solomon (1 Kings ii. 3, 4); they are stated by him again in chap. iii. 14, and more distinctly in chap. ix. 1-9. Obedience to the Deuteronomic law is the qualification for an approving verdict; deviation from it is the source of ill success (1 Kings xi. 9-13, xiv. 7-11, xvi. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 7-18), and the sure prelude to condemnation. Every king of the Northern Kingdom is characterised as doing 'that which was evil in the eyes of Jehovah.' In the Southern Kingdom the exceptions are Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, Josiah—usually, however, with the limitation that 'the high places were not removed' as demanded by the Deuteronomic law.[1] The constantly recurring Deuteronomic phrases which most directly illustrate the point of view from which the history is regarded are, '*To keep the charge of Jehovah*'; '*to walk in the ways of Jehovah*'; '*to keep* (or execute) *His commandments, or statutes, and judgments*'; '*to do*

makes large concessions. Thus he says, "It is particularly to be noticed that in the Book of the Pentateuch itself the Mosaic origin is not claimed" (*Book by Book*, p. 5). "The anonymous character of all the historical writings of the Old Testament would lead us to conclude that the ancient Hebrews had not the idea of literary property which we attach to authorship" (p. 8). "It is long since the composite character of the Pentateuch was observed" (p. 9). "There may remain doubts as to when the various parts of the Pentateuch were actually written down; it may be admitted that the later writers wrote in the light of the events and circumstances of their own times" (p. 16).

[1] Driver, p. 189. Comp. Professor Robertson Smith: "The most notable feature in the extant redactions of the book is the strong interest shown in the Deuteronomic law of Moses, and especially in the centralisation of worship in the Temple on Zion, as pre-supposed in Deuteronomy and enforced by Josiah. This interest did not exist in ancient Israel, and is quite foreign to the older memories incorporated in the book."

that which is right in the eyes of Jehovah'; 'to provoke Jehovah to anger'; 'to cleave to Jehovah.' If the reader will be at the pains of underlining in his text the phrases here cited" (and many others of which Professor Driver gives a list), "he will not only realise how numerous they are, but also perceive how they seldom occur indiscriminately in the narrative as such, but are generally aggregated in particular passages (mostly comments on the history, or speeches) which are thereby distinguished from their context, and shown to be presumably the work of a different hand."[1]

vii. It must not be imagined that the late compilation of the book, or its subsequent recensions, or the dogmatic colouring which it may have insensibly derived from the religious systems and organisations of days subsequent to the Exile, have in the least affected the main historic veracity of the kingly annals. They may have influenced the omissions and the moral estimates, but the events themselves are in every case confirmed when we are able to compare them with any records and monuments of Phœnicia, Moab, Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. The discovery and deciphering of the Moabite stone, and of the painted vaunts of Shishak at Karnak, and of the cuneiform inscriptions, confirm in every case the general truth, in some cases the minute details, of the sacred historian. In so passing an allusion as that in 2 Kings iii. 16, 17 the accuracy of the narrative is confirmed by the fact that (as Delitzsch has shown) the method of obtaining water is that which is to this day employed in the Wady el-Hasa at the southern end of the Dead Sea.[2]

viii. The Book of Kings consists, according tc

[1] Driver, p. 192. [2] Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 6th ed., p. 567.

Stade,[1] of, (*a*) 1 Kings i., ii., the close of a history of David, in continuation of 1 and 2 Samuel. The continuity of the Scriptures is marked in an interesting way by the word "and," with which so many of the books begin. The Jews, devout believers in the work of a Divine Providence, saw no discontinuities in the course of national events.[2]

(*b*) 1 Kings iii.—xi., a conglomerate of notices about Solomon, grouped round chaps. vi., vii., which narrate the building of the Temple. They are arranged by the præ-exilic compiler, but not without later touches from the Deuteronomic standpoint of a later editor (*e.g.*, iii. 2, 3). Chap. viii. 14—ix. 9 also belong to the later editor.

(*c*) 1 Kings xi.—2 Kings xxiii. 29, an epitome of the entire regal period of Judah and Israel, after the three first reigns over the undivided kingdom, compiled mainly before the Exile.

(*d*) 2 Kings xxiii. 30—xxv. 30, a conclusion, added, in its present form, after the Exile.

Two positions are maintained (A) as regards the text, and (B) as regards the chronology.

A. As regards the *text* no one will maintain the old false assertion that it has come down to us in a perfect condition. There are in the history of the text three epochs: 1, The Præ-Talmudic; 2, The Talmudic-Massoretic up to the time when vowel-points were introduced; 3, The Massoretic traditions of a later period. The marginal annotations known as Q'ri, "read" (plural, *Qarjan*), consist of glosses and euphemisms which were used in the service of the

[1] *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, i. 73.

[2] Even the First Book of Maccabees begins with καὶ ἐγένετο.

[3] Stade thinks that this is confirmed by viii. 46-49.

synagogue in place of the written text (K'tib); the oral tradition of these variations was known as the Massora (*i.e.*, tradition). The Greek version (Septuagint, LXX.), which is of immense importance for the history of the text, was begun in Alexandria under Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 283—247). It presents many additions and variations in the Books of Kings.[1]

All Hebrew manuscripts, as is well known, are of comparatively recent date, owing to the strict rule of the Jewish Schools that any manuscript which had in the slightest degree suffered from time or use was to be instantly destroyed. The oldest Hebrew manuscript is supposed to be the Codex Babylonicus at St. Petersburg (A.D. 916), unless one recently discovered by Dr. Ginsburg in the British Museum be older. Most Hebrew manuscripts are later than the twelfth century.

The variations in the Samaritan Pentateuch, and in the Septuagint version—the latter of which are often specially valuable as indications of the original text—furnish abundant proof that no miracle has been wrought to preserve the text of Scripture from the changes and corruptions which always arise in the course of constant transcriptions.

A further and serious difficulty in the reproduction of events in their historic exactitude is introduced by the certainty that many books of the Bible, in their

[1] Stade, pp. 32 ff. Thus, in 1 Kings viii. 14-53, verses 12, 13 are in the Septuagint placed *after* verse 53, are incomplete in the Hebrew text, and have a remarkable reading in the Targum. Professor Robertson Smith infers that a Deuteronomic insertion has misplaced them in one text, and mutilated them in another. The order of the LXX. differs in 1 Kings iv. 19-27; and it omits 1 Kings vi. 11-14; ix. 15-26. It transposes the story of Naboth, and omits the story of Ahijah and Abijah, which is added from Aquila's version to the Alexandrian MS. See Wellhausen-Bleek, *Einleitung*, §§ 114, 134.

present form, represent the results arrived at after their recension by successive editors, some of whom lived many centuries after the events recorded. In the Books of Kings we probably see many *nuances* which were not introduced till after the epoch-making discovery of the Book of the Law (perhaps the essential parts of the Book of Deuteronomy) in the reign of Josiah, A.D. 621 (2 Kings xxii. 8-14). It is, for instance, impossible to declare with certainty what parts of the Temple service were really coæval with David and Solomon, and what parts had arisen in later days. There appear to be liturgical touches, or alterations as indicated by the variations of the text in 1 Kings viii. 4, 12, 13. In xviii. 29-36 the allusion to the *Minchah* is absent from the LXX. in verse 36, and in 2 Kings iii. 20 another reading is suggested.

B. As regards the difficult question of *Chronology* we need add but little to what has been elsewhere said.[1] Even the most conservative critics admit that (1) the numbers of the Biblical text have often become corrupt or uncertain; and (2) that the ancient Hebrews were careless on the subject of exact chronology. The Chronology of the Kings, as it now stands, is historically true in its general outlines, but in its details presents us with data which are mutually irreconcilable. It is obviously artificial, and is dominated by slight modifications of the round number 40.[2] Thus from the Exile to the Building of the Temple is stated at 480 years, and from that period to the fiftieth year of the Exile also at 480 years. In the Chronicles there are eleven high priests from Azariah ben-Al imaaz to the Exile of

[1] See Appendix on the Chronology.

[2] See Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 285-87; Robertson Smith, *Journ. of Philology*, x. 209-13.

Jozadak, which, with the Exile period, gives twelve generations of 40 years each. Again, from Rehoboam to the Fall of Samaria in the sixth year of Hezekiah, following the 40 years' reign of Saul, of David, and of Solomon, we have :—

Rehoboam, Abijah . . .	20	years.
Asa	41	„
Jehoshaphat, Jehoram } Ahaziah, Athaliah } . .	40	„
Joash	40	„
Amaziah, Uzziah . . .	81	„
Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah . .	38	„

After the Fall of Samaria we have :—

Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon .	80	„

and it can hardly be a mere accident that in these lists the number 40 is only modified by slight necessary details.

The history of the Northern Kingdom seems to be roughly trisected into 80 years before Benhadad's first invasion, 80 years of Syrian war, 40 years of prosperity under Jeroboam II., and 40 years of decline.[1] This is probably a result of chronological system, not uninfluenced by mystical considerations. For 480 = 40 × 12. *Forty* is repeatedly used as a sacred number in connexion with epochs of penitence and punishment. *Twelve* (4 × 3) is, according to Bähr (the chief student of numerical and other symbolism), "the signature of the people of Israel"—as a whole (4), in the midst of which God (3) resides. Similarly Stade thinks that

[1] *Encycl. Brit.*, s.v. Kings (W.R.S.).

16 is the basal number for the reigns of kings from Jehu to Hoshea, and 12 from Jeroboam to Jehu.[1]

It is possible that the synchronistic data did not proceed from the compiler of the Book of Kings, but were added by the last redactor.

Are these critical conclusions so formidable? Are they fraught with disastrous consequences? Which is really dangerous—truth laboriously sought for, or error accepted with unreasoning blindness and maintained with invincible prejudice?

[1] See Stade, i. 88-99; W. R. Smith, *l. c.*; Kreuz, *Zeitschr. f. Wiss. Theol.*, 1877, p. 404. Some of the dates, as Dr. W. R. Smith shows, are "traditional," and are probably taken from Temple records (*e.g.*, the invasion of Shishak, and the change of the revenue system in the twenty-third year of Joash). Taking these as data, we have (roughly) 160 years to the twenty-third year of Joash, + 160 to the death of Hezekiah, + 160 years to the return from the Exile = 480. He infers that "the existing scheme was obtained by setting down a few fixed dates, and filling up the intervals with figures in which 20 and 40 were the main units."

CHAPTER III.

THE HISTORIAN OF THE KINGS.

"The hearts of kings are in Thy rule and governance, and Thou dost dispose and turn them as it *seemeth best* to Thy godly wisdom."

WERE we to judge the compiler or epitomator of the Book of Kings from the literary standpoint of modern historians, he would, no doubt, hold a very inferior place; but so to judge him would be to take a mistaken view of his object, and to test his merits and demerits by conditions which are entirely alien from the ideal of his contemporaries and the purpose which he had in view.

It is quite true that he does not even aim at fulfilling the requirements demanded of an ordinary secular historian. He does not attempt to present any philosophical conception of the political events and complicated interrelations of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. His method of writing the story of the Kings of Judah and Israel in so many separate paragraphs gives a certain confusedness to the general picture. It leads inevitably to the repetition of the same facts in the accounts of two reigns. Each king is judged from a single point of view, and that not the point of view by which his own age was influenced, but one arrived at in later centuries, and under changed

conditions, religious and political. There is no attempt to show that

> "God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The military splendour or political ability of a king goes for nothing. It has so little interest for the writer that a brilliant and powerful ruler like Jeroboam II. seems to excite in him as little interest as an effeminate weakling like Ahaziah. He passes over without notice events of such capital importance as the invasion of Zerah the Ethiopian (2 Chron. xiv. 9-15, xvi. 8); the wars of Jehoshaphat against Edom, Ammon, and Moab (2 Chron. xx. 1-25); of Uzziah against the Philistines (2 Chron. xxvi. 6-8); and of the Assyrians against Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11-13). He neither tells us that Omri subdued Moab, nor that he was defeated by Syria. He scarcely more than mentions events of such deep interest as the conquest of Jerusalem by Shishak (1 Kings xiv. 25, 26); the war between Abijam and Jeroboam (1 Kings xv. 7); of Amaziah with Edom (2 Kings xiv. 7), or even the expedition of Josiah against Pharaoh-nechoh (2 Kings xxiii. 29).[1] For these events he is content to relegate us to the best authorities which he used, with the phrase "and the rest of his acts, his wars, and all that he did." The fact that Omri was the founder of so powerful a dynasty that the Kings of Israel were known to Assyria as "the House of Omri," does not induce him to give more than a passing notice to that king. It did not come within his province to record such memorable circumstances as that Ahab fought with the Aramæan host against

[1] *Speaker's Commentary*, ii. 477.

Assyria at the battle of Karkar, or that the bloodstained Jehu had to send a large tribute to Shalmaneser II.

There is a certain monotony in the grounds given for the moral judgments passed on each successive monarch. One unchanging formula tells us of every one of the kings of Israel that "*he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*," with exclusive reference in most cases to "the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin." The unfavourable remark about king after king of Judah that "*nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places*" (1 Kings xv. 14, xxii. 43; 2 Kings xii. 3, xiv. 4) makes no allowance for the fact that high places dedicated to Jehovah had been previously used unblamed by the greatest judges and seers, and that the feeling against them had only entered into the national life in later days.

It belongs to the same essential view of history that the writer's attention is so largely occupied by the activity of the prophets, whose personality often looms far more largely on his imagination than that of the kings. If we were to remove from his pages all that he tells us of Nathan, Ahijah of Shiloh, Shemaiah, Jehu the son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Isaiah, Huldah, Jonah, and various nameless "men of God,"[1] the residuum would be meagre indeed. The silence as to Jeremiah is a remarkable circumstance which no theory has explained; but we must remember the small extent of the compiler's canvas, and that, even as it is, we should have but a dim insight into the condition of the two kingdoms if we did not study also the extant writings of contemporary prophets. His whole aim is

[1] 1 Kings xiii. 1-32, xx. 13-15, 28, 35, 42; 2 Kings xxi. 10-15.

to exhibit the course of events as so controlled by the Divine Hand that faithfulness to God ensured blessing, and unfaithfulness brought down His displeasure and led to national decline. So far from concealing this principle he states it, again and again, in the most formal manner.[1]

These might be objections against the author if he had written his book in the spirit of an ordinary historian. They cease to have any validity when we remember that he does not profess to offer us a secular history at all. His aim and method have been described as "prophetico-didactic." He writes avowedly as one who believed in the Theocracy. His epitomes from the documents which he had before him were made with a definite religious purpose. The importance or unimportance of kings in his eyes depended on their relation to the opinions which had come home to the conscience of the nation in the still recent reformation of Josiah. He strove to solve the moral problems of God's government as they presented themselves, with much distress and perplexity, to the mind of his nation in the days of its decadence and threatened obliteration. And in virtue of his method of dealing with such themes, he shares with the other historical writers of the Old Testament a right to be regarded as one of the *Prophetæ priores*.[2]

What were those problems?

They were the old problems respecting God's moral

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 7-23, 32, 41, xxiii. 26, 27.

[2] נְבִיאִים רִאשׁוֹנִים. The three greater and twelve minor prophets are called *prophetæ posteriores* (אַחֲרוֹנִים). Daniel is classed among the Hagiographa (כְּתוּבִים). This title of "former prophets" was, however, given by the Jews to the historic books from the mistaken fancy that they were all *written* by prophets.

government of the world which always haunted the Jewish mind, complicated by the disappointment of national convictions about the promises of God to the race of Abraham and the family of David.

The Exile was already imminent—it had indeed partly begun in the deportation of Jehoiakin and many Jews to Babylon (B.C. 598)—when the book saw the light. The writer was compelled to look back with tears on "the days that were no more." The epoch of Israel's splendour and dominion seemed to have passed for ever. And yet, was not God the true Governor of His people? Had He not chosen Jacob for Himself, and Israel for His own possession? Had not Abraham received the promise that his seed should be as the sand of the sea, and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed? Or was it a mere illusion that "when Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son"? The writer clung with unquenchable faith to his convictions about the destinies of his people, and yet every year seemed to render their fulfilment more distant and more impossible.

The promise to Abraham had been renewed to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to the patriarchs; but to David and his house it had been reiterated with special emphasis and fresh details. That promise, as it stood recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12-16, was doubtless in the writer's hands. The election of Israel as "God's people" is "a world-historic fact, the fundamental miracle which no criticism can explain away."[1] And, in addition, God had sworn in His holiness that He would not forsake David. "When thy days be fulfilled," He had

[1] Martensen, *Dogmatics* p. 363.

said, "and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee and will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and *I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever, I will be his father, and he shall be My son.* If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. *But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul whom I put away before thee, and thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever.*" This promise haunted the imagination of the compiler of the Book of Kings. He repeatedly refers to it, and it is so constantly present to his mind that his whole narrative seems to be a comment, and often a perplexed and half-despairing comment, upon it.[1] Yet he resisted the assaults of despair. The Lord had made a faithful oath unto David, and He would *not* depart from it.

It is this that makes him linger so lovingly on the glories of the reign of Solomon. At first they seem to inaugurate an era of overwhelming and permanent prosperity. Because Solomon was the heir of David whom God had chosen, his dominion is established without an effort in spite of a formidable conspiracy. Under his wise, pacific rule the united kingdom springs to the zenith of its greatness. The writer dwells with fond regret upon the glories of the Temple, the Empire, and the Court of the wise king. He records God's

[1] 2 Sam. vii. 12-16; 1 Kings xi. 36, xv. 4; 2 Kings viii. 19, xxv. 27-30. "His object evidently was," says Professor Robertson, "to exhibit the bloom and decay of the Kingdom of Israel, and to trace the influences which marked its varying destiny. He proceeds on the fixed idea that the promise given to David of a sure house remained in force during all the vicissitudes of the divided kingdom, and was not even frustrated by the fall of the kingdom of Judah."

renewed promises to him that there should not be any among the kings like unto him all his days. Alas! the splendid visions had faded away like an unsubstantial pageant. Glory had led to vice and corruption. Worldly policy carried apostasy in its train. The sun of Solomon set in darkness, as the sun of David had set in decrepitude and blood. "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice: . but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee. Notwithstanding in thy day I will not do it for David thy father's sake. . . Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son, for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."[1]

Thus at one blow the heir of "Solomon in all his glory" dwindles into the kinglet of a paltry little province not nearly so large as the smallest of English counties. So insignificant, in fact, do the fortunes of the kingdom become, that, for long periods, it has no history worth speaking of. The historian is driven to occupy himself with the northern tribes because they are the scene of the activity of two glorious though widely different prophets. From first to last we seem to hear in the prose of the annalist the cry of the troubled Psalmist, "Lord, where are Thy old loving-kindnesses which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth? Remember, Lord, the rebukes that Thy servants have, and how I do bear in my bosom the rebukes of

[1] 1 Kings xi. 9-13.

many people wherewith thine enemies have blasphemed Thee, and slandered the footsteps of Thine anointed." And yet, in spite of all, with invincible confidence, he adds, "Praised be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen."

And this is one of the great lessons which we learn alike from Scripture and from the experience of every holy and humble life. It may be briefly summed up in the words, "Put thou thy trust in God and be doing good, and He shall bring it to pass." In multitudes of forms the Bible inculcates upon us the lesson, "Have faith in God," "Fear not; only believe." The paradox of the New Testament is the existence of joy in the midst of sorrow and sighing, of exultation (ἀγαλλίασις) even amid the burning fiery furnaces of anguish and persecution. The secret of both Testaments alike is the power to maintain an unquenchable faith, an unbroken peace, an indomitable trust amid every complication of disaster and apparent overthrow. The writer of the Book of Kings saw that God is patient, because He is eternal; that even the histories of nations, not individual lives only, are but as one ticking of a clock amid the eternal silence; that God's ways are not man's ways. And because this is so—because God sitteth above the water floods and remaineth a King for ever—therefore we can attain to that ultimate triumph of faith which consists in holding fast our profession, not only amid all the waves and storms of calamity, but even when we are brought face to face with that which wears the aspect of absolute and final failure. The historian says in the name of his nation what the saint has so often to say in his own, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Amos, earliest of the prophets whose written utterances have been preserved,

undazzled by the magnificent revival of the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam II., was still convinced that the future lay with the poor fallen "booth" of David's royalty: "And I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, . saith the Lord that doeth this."[1] In many a dark age of Jewish affliction this fire of conviction has still burned amid the ashes of national hopes after it had seemed to have flickered out under white heaps of chilly dust.[2]

[1] Amos ix. 11, 12. [2] Psalm lxxxix. 48-50.

CHAPTER IV.

GOD IN HISTORY.

"The Lord remaineth a King for ever."

HAD the compiler of the Book of Kings been so incompetent and valueless an historian as some critics have represented, it would indeed have been strange that his book should have kindled so immortal an interest, or have taken its place securely in the Jewish canon among the most sacred books of the world. He could not have secured this recognition without real and abiding merits. His greatness appears by the manner in which he grapples with, and is not crushed by, the problems presented to him by the course of events to him so dismal.

1. He wrote after Israel had long been scattered among the nations. The sons of Jacob had been deported into strange lands to be hopelessly lost and absorbed amid heathen peoples. The district which had been assigned to the Ten Tribes after the conquest of Joshua had been given over to an alien and mongrel population. The worst anticipations of northern prophets like Amos and Hoshea had been terribly fulfilled. The glory of Samaria had been wiped out, as when one wipeth a dish, wiping and turning it upside down. From the beginning of Israel's separate dominion the prophets saw the germ of its final ruin in what is

called the "calf-worship" of Jeroboam, which prepared the way for the Baal-worship introduced by the House of Omri. In the two and a half centuries of Samaria's existence the compiler of this history finds nothing of eternal interest except the activity of God's great messengers. In the history of Judah the better reigns of a Jehoshaphat, of a Hezekiah, of a Josiah, had shed a sunset gleam over the waning fortunes of the remnant of God's people. Hezekiah and Josiah, with whatever deflections, had both ruled in the theocratic spirit. They had both inaugurated reforms. The reformation achieved by the latter was so sweeping and thorough as to kindle the hope that the deep wound inflicted on the nation by the manifold crimes of Manasseh had been healed. But it was not so. The records of these two best kings end, nevertheless, in prophecies of doom.[1] The results of their reforming efforts proved to be partial and unsatisfactory. A race of vassal weaklings succeeded. Jehoahaz was taken captive by the Egyptians, who set up Jehoiakim as their puppet. He submits to Nebuchadnezzar, attempts a weak revolt, and is punished. In the short reign of Jehoiachin the captivity begins, and the futile rebellion of Zedekiah leads to tne deportation of his people, the burning of the Holy City, and the desecration of the Temple. It seemed as though the ruin of the olden hopes could not have been more absolute. Yet the historian will not abandon them. Clinging to God's promises with desperate and pathetic tenacity he gilds his last page, as with one faint sunbeam struggling out of the stormy darkness of the exile, by narrating how Evil-merodach released Jehoiachin from his long captivity, and treated

[1] 2 Kings xx. 16-18, xxii. 16-20.

him with kindness, and advanced him to the first rank among the vassal kings in the court of Babylon. If the ruler of Judah must be a hopeless prisoner, let him at least occupy among his fellow-prisoners a sad pre-eminence!

2. The historian has been blamed for the perpetual gloom which enwraps his narrative. Surely the criticism is unjust. He did not invent his story. He is no whit more gloomy than Thucydides, who had to record how the brief gleam of Athenian glory sank in the Bay of Syracuse into a sea of blood. He is not half so gloomy as Tacitus, who is forced to apologise for the "hues of earthquake and eclipse" which darken his every page. The gloom lay in the events of which he desired to be the faithful recorder. He certainly did not love gloom. He lingers at disproportionate length over the grandeur of the reign of Solomon, dilating fondly upon every element of his magnificence, and unwilling to tear himself away from the one period which realised his ideal expectations. After that period his spirits sink. He cared less to deal with a divided kingdom of which only the smallest fragment was even approximately faithful. There could be nothing but gloom in the record of shortlived, sanguinary, and idolatrous dynasties, which succeeded each other like the scenes of a grim phantasmagoria in Samaria and Jezreel. There could be nothing but gloom in the story of that northern kingdom in which king after king was dogged to ruin by the politic unfaithfulness of the rebel by whom it had been founded. Nor could there be much real brightness in the story of humiliated Judah. There also many kings preferred a diplomatic worldliness to reliance on their true source of strength. Even in Judah there were kings who defiled God's own

temple with heathen abominations; and a saint like Hezekiah had been followed by an apostate like Manasseh. Had Judah been content to dwell in the defence of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, she would have been defended under His wings and been safe beneath His feathers; His righteousness and truth would have been her shield and buckler. He who protected her in the awful crisis of Sennacherib's invasion had proved that He never faileth them that trust Him. But her kings had preferred to lean on such a bruised reed as Egypt, which broke under the weight, and pierced the hand of all who relied on her assistance. "But ye said, Nay, but we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift."[1]

3. And has not gloom been the normal characteristic of many a long period of human history? It is with the life of nations as with the life of men. With nations, too, there is "a perpetual fading of all beauty into darkness, and of all strength into dust." Humanity advances, but it advances over the ruins of peoples and the wrecks of institutions. Truth forces its way into acceptance, but its progress is "from scaffold to scaffold, and from stake to stake." All who have generalised on the course of history have been forced to recognise its agonies and disappointments. There, says Byron,

> "There is the moral of all human tales;
> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past;
> First Freedom, and then Glory—when that fails,
> Wealth, Vice, Corruption—Barbarism at last.
> And History, with all her volumes vast,
> Hath but one page: 'tis better written here

[1] Isa. xxx. 16.

Where gorgeous tyranny hath thus amassed
All treasures, all delights that eye or ear,
Heart, soul could seek, tongue ask."

Mr. J. R. Lowell, looking at the question from another side, sings :—

"Careless seems the Great Avenger; History's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt all systems and the Word;
Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the throne—
Yet that scaffold sways the Future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

Mr. W. H. Lecky, again, considering the facts of national story from the point of view of heredity, and the permanent consequences of wrong-doing, sings :—

"The voice of the afflicted is rising to the sun,
The thousands who have perished for the selfishness of one
The judgment-seat polluted, the altar overthrown,
The sighing of the exile, the tortured captive's groan,
The many crushed and plundered to gratify the few,
The hounds of hate pursuing the noble and the true."

Or, if we desire a prose authority, can we deny this painful estimate of Mr. Ruskin?—"Truly it seems to me as I gather in my mind the evidence of insane religion, degraded art, merciless war, sullen toil, detestable pleasure, and vain or vile hope in which the nations of the world have lived since first they could bear record of themselves, it seems to me, I say, as if the race itself were still half serpent, not extricated yet from its clay; a lacertine brood of bitterness, the glory of it emaciate with cruel hunger and blotted with venomous stain, and the track of it on the leaf a glittering slime, and in the sand a useless furrow."[1]

Dark as is the story which the author of the Book of Kings has to record, and hopeless as might seem to

[1] *Queen of the Air*, p. 87.

be the conclusion of the tragedy, he is responsible for neither. He can but tell the things that were, and tell them as they were; the picture is, after all, far less gloomy than that presented in many a great historic record. Consider the features of such an age as that recorded by Tacitus, with the "Iliad of woes" of which he was the annalist.[1] Does Jewish history offer us nothing but this horrible monotony of delations and suicides? Consider the long ages of darkness and retrogression in the fifth and following centuries; or the unutterable miseries inflicted on the seaboard of Europe by the invasions of the Norsemen—the mere thought of which drove Charlemagne to tears; or the long complicated agony produced by hundreds of petty feudal wars, and the cruel tyranny of marauding barons; or the condition of England in the middle of the fourteenth century when the Black Death swept away half of her population; or the extreme misery of the masses after the Thirty Years' War; or the desolating horror of the wars of Napoleon which filled Germany with homeless and starving orphans. The annals of the Hebrew monarchy are less grim than these; yet the House of Israel might also seem to have been chosen out for a pre-eminence of sorrow which ended in making Jerusalem "a rendezvous for the extermination of the race." When once the Jewish wars began—

> "Vengeance! thy fiery wing their race pursued,
> Thy thirsty poniard blushed with infant blood!
> Roused at thy call and panting still for game
> The bird of war, the Latin eagle came.

[1] Tac., *Hist.*, 1, 2: "Opus aggredior opimum casibus, atrox prœliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace sævum."

Then Judah raged, by ruffian discord led,
Drunk with the steamy carnage of the dead;
He saw his sons by dubious slaughter fall,
And war without, and death within the wall."

Probably no calamity since time began exceeded in horror and anguish the carnage and cannibalism and demoniac outbreak of every vile and furious passion which marked the siege of Jerusalem; and, in the dreary ages which followed, the world has heard rising from the Jewish people the groan of myriads of broken hearts.

"The fruits of the earth have lost their savour," wrote one poor Rabbi, the son of Gamaliel, "and no dew falls."

In the crowded Ghettos of mediæval cities, during the foul tyranny of the Inquisition in Spain, and many a time throughout Europe, amid the iron oppression of ignorant and armed brutality, the hapless Jews have been forced to cry aloud to the God of their fathers: "Thou feedest Thy people with the bread of tears, and givest them plenteousness of tears to drink!" "Thou sellest Thy people for nought, and givest no money for them."

When the eccentric Frederic William I. of Prussia ordered his Court chaplain to give him in one sentence a proof of Christianity, the chaplain answered without a moment's hesitation: "The Jews, your Majesty." Truly it might seem that the fortunes of that strange people had been designed for a special lesson, not to them only, but to the whole human race; and the general outlines of that lesson have never been more clearly and forcibly indicated than in the Book of Kings.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORY WITH A PURPOSE.

'History, as distinguished from chronicles or annals, must always contain a theory whether confessed by the writer or not. A sound theory is simply a general conception which co-ordinates a multitude of facts. Without this, facts cease to have interest except to the antiquarian."—LAURIE.

THE prejudice against history written with a purpose is a groundless prejudice. Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, had each his guiding principle, no less than Ammianus Marcellinus, St. Augustine, Orosius, Bossuet, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, Hegel, Fichte, and every modern historian worthy the name. They have all, as Mr. Morley says, felt the intellectual necessity for showing "those secret dispositions of events which prepared the way for great changes, as well as the momentous conjunctures which more immediately brought them to pass." Orosius, founding his epitome on the hint given by St. Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei*, begins with the famous words, "*Divina providentia agitur mundus et homo.*" Other serious writers may vary the formula, but in all their annals the lesson is essentially the same. "The foundation upon which, at all periods, Israel's sense of its national unity rested was religious in its character."

"The history of Israel," says Stade, "is essentially a history of religious ideas."[1]

Of course the history is rendered valueless if, in pursuing his purpose, the writer either falsifies events or intentionally manipulates them in such a way that they lead to false issues. But the man who is not inspired by his subject, the man to whom the history which he is narrating has no particular significance, must be a man of dull imagination or cold affections. No such man can write a true history at all. For history is the record of what has happened to men in nations, and its events are swayed by human passions, and palpitate with human emotions. There is no great historian who may not be charged with having been in some respects a partisan. The ebb and flow of his narrative, the "to-and-fro-conflicting waves" of the struggles which he records, must be to him as idle as a dance of puppets if he feels no special interest in the chief actors, and has not formed a distinct judgment of the sweep of the great unseen tidal forces by which they are determined and controlled.

The greatness of the sacred historian of the Kings consists in his firm grasp of the principle that God is the controlling power and sin the disturbing force in the entire history of men and nations.

Surely he does not stand alone in either conviction. Both propositions are confirmed by all experience. In all life, individual and national, sin is weakness; and human life without God, whether isolated or corporate, is no better than

"A trouble of ants 'mid a million million of suns."

[1] Wellhausen, *History of Israel*, p. 432; Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, i., p. 12; Robinson, *Ancient History of Israel*, p. 15.

"Why do the heathen so furiously rage together," sang the Psalmist, "and why do the people imagine a vain thing? . . He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision." Even the oldest of the Greek poets, in the first lines of the *Iliad*, declares that amid those scenes of carnage, and the tragic fate of heroes, *Διὸς δ' ἐτέλειετο βουλή*:—

> "Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
> Of woes unnumbered, Heavenly Goddess sing;
> That wrath which hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign
> The souls of countless chiefs untimely slain;
> Whose limbs, unburied on the naked shore,
> Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore:
> Since great Achilles and Atreides strove,
> Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove!"

In the *Odyssey* the same conviction is repeated, where Odysseus says that "it is the fate-fraught decree of Zeus which stands by as arbiter, when it is meant that miserable men should suffer many woes."[1] The heathen, too, saw clearly that,

> "Though the mills of God grind slowly,
> Yet they grind exceeding small;"

and that, alike for Trojans and Danaans, the chariot-wheels of Heaven roll onward to their destined goal.

Such words express a belief in the hearts of pagans identical with that in the hearts of the early disciples when they exclaimed: "Of a truth in this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, *to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass.*"[2]

[1] *Od.*, ix. 51, 52. [2] Acts iv. 27, 28.

The ever-present intensity of these convictions leads the historian of the Kings to many shorter or longer "homiletic excursuses," in which he develops his main theme. And if he inculcates his high faith in the form of speeches and other insertions which perhaps express his own views more distinctly than they could have been expressed by the earlier prophets and kings of Judah, he adopts a method which was common in past ages and has always been conceded to the greatest and most trustworthy of ancient historians.

CHAPTER VI.

LESSONS OF THE HISTORY.

"Great men are the inspired texts of that Divine Book of Revelation, of which a chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named History."—CARLYLE.

THUS History becomes one of the most precious books of God. To speak vaguely of "a stream of tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness," is to endow "a stream of tendency" with a moral sense. Philosophers may talk of "dass unbekannte höhere Wesen das wir ahnen"; but the great majority, alike of the wisest and the humblest of mankind, will give to that moral "Not-ourselves" the name of God. The truth was more simply and more religiously expressed by the American orator when he said that "One with God is always in a majority," and "God is the only final public opinion." Only thus can we account for the fact that events apparently the most trivial have repeatedly been overruled to produce the most stupendous issues, and opposition apparently the most overwhelming has been made to further the very ends which it most fiercely resisted. "The fierceness of man shall turn to Thy praise, and the fierceness of them shalt Thou restrain."

St. Paul expresses his sense of this fact when he says, "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty,

not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, and the weak things of the world, and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised did God choose, and the things that are not, that He might bring to nought the things that are":[1] and that "because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."[2]

The most conspicuous instance of these laws in history is furnished by the victories of Christianity. It was against all probability that a faith not only despised but execrated—a faith whose crucified Messiah kindled unmitigated contempt, and its doctrine of the Resurrection unmingled derision—a faith confined originally to a handful of ignorant peasants drawn from the dregs of a tenth-rate and subjugated people—should prevail over all the philosophy, and genius, and ridicule, and authority of the world, supported by the diadems of all-powerful Cæsars and the swords of thirty legions. It was against all probability that a faith which, in the world's judgment, was so abject, should in so short a space of time achieve so complete a triumph, not by aggressive force, but by meek non-resistance, and that it should win its way through armed antagonism by the sole powers of innocence and of martyrdom—"not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

But though the thoughtful Israelite had no such glorious spectacle as this before him, he saw something analogous to it. The prophets had been careful to point out that no merit or superiority of its own had caused the people to be chosen by God from among the nations

[1] 1 Cor. i. 26-28. [2] *Id.*, v. 25.

for the mighty functions for which it was destined, and which it had already in part fulfilled. "And thou shalt answer before the Lord thy God, and say, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; he went down to Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number."[1] The chosen people could boast of no loftier ancestry than that they sprang from a fugitive from the land of Ur, whose descendants had sunk into a horde of miserable slaves in the hot valley of Egypt. Yet from that degraded and sensuous serfdom God had led them into the wilderness "through parted seas and thundering battles," and had spoken to them at Sinai in a voice so mighty that its echoes have rolled among the nations for evermore. If through their sins and shortcomings they had once more been reduced to the rank of captive strangers in a strange land, the historian knew that even then their lot was not so abject as it once had been. They had at least heroic memories and an imperishable past. He believed that though God's face was darkened to them, the light of it was neither utterly nor finally withdrawn. Nothing could henceforth shake his trust that, even when Israel walked in the valley of the shadow of death, God would still be with His people; that "He would *love* their souls out of the pit of destruction."[2] The vain-glorious efforts of the heathen were foredoomed to final impotence, for God ruled the raging of the sea, the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people.

If this high faith seemed so often to lead only to frustrate hopes, the historian saw the reason. His philosophy of history reduced itself to the one rule that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the

[1] Deut. xxvi. 5. [2] Isa. xxxviii. 17 (Heb.).

reproach of any people." It is a sublime philosophy, and no other is possible. It might be written as the comment on every history in the world. The prophets write it large, and again and again, as in letters of blood and fire. Upon their pages, even from the days of Balaam,

> "In outline dim and vast
> Their mighty shadows cast
> The giant forms of Empires on their way
> To ruin: one by one
> They tower, and they are gone!"

Balaam had uttered his denunciation on Moab and Amalek and the Kenite. Amos hurled defiance on Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. Isaiah taunted Egypt with her splendid impotence, and had said of Babylon: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" As the sphere of national life enlarged, Nahum had poured forth his exultant dirge over the falling greatness of Assyria; and Ezekiel had painted the desolation which should come on glorious Tyre. These great prophets had read upon the palace-walls of the mightiest kingdoms the burning messages of doom, because they knew that (to quote the words of a living historian) "for every false word and unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression, for lust and vanity, the price has to be paid at last. . . Justice and truth alone endure and live. Injustice and falsehood may be long-lived, but doomsday comes to them at last."

Has the course of ages at all altered the incidence of these eternal laws? Do modern kingdoms offer any exceptions to the universal experience of the past? Look at Spain. Corrupted by her own vast wealth, by the confusion of religion with the indolent acceptance of lies which paraded themselves as catholic orthodoxy,

and by the fatal disseverance of religion from the moral law, she has sunk into decrepitude. Read in the utter collapse and ruin of her great Armada the inevitable Nemesis on greed, indolence, and superstition. Look at modern France. When the inflated bubble of her arrogance collapsed at Sedan as with a touch, two of her own writers, certainly not prejudiced in favour of Christian conclusions—Ernest Renan and Alexandre Dumas, *fils*—pointed independently to the causes of her ruin, and found them in her irreligion and her debauchery. The warnings which they addressed to their countrymen in that hour of humiliation, on the sanctity of family life and the eternal obligations of national righteousness, were identical with those addressed to the Israelites of old by Amos or Isaiah. The only difference was that the form in which they were uttered was modern and came with incomparably less of impassioned force.

The historian who, six hundred years before Christ, saw so clearly, and illustrated with such striking conciseness, the laws of God's moral governance of the world stands far above the casual censure of those who judge him by a mistaken standard. We owe him a debt of the deepest gratitude, not only because he has preserved for us the national records which might otherwise have perished, but far more because he has seen and pointed out their true significance. Imagine an English writer trying to give a sketch of English history since the death of Henry VI. in a thin volume of sixty or seventy octavo pages! Is it conceivable that even the most gifted and brilliant of our historians could in so short a space have rendered such a service as this sacred historian has rendered to all mankind? Do we owe nothing to the vivid insight which enabled

him to set so many characters clearly before us with a few strokes of the pen? It is true that it is the *history* which is inspired rather than the *record* of the history; but the record itself is of quite exceptional value. It is true that the prophetic historian and the scientific historian must be judged by wholly different canons of criticism; but may not the prophetic historian be much the greater of the two? By the light of his histories we can read all histories, and see the common lesson taught us by the life of nations, as by the life of individuals—which is, that obedience to God's law is the only path of safety, the only condition of permanence. To fear God and keep His commandments is the end of the matter, and is the whole duty of man. To one who follows the guiding clue of these convictions history becomes "Providence made visible."

Bossuet, like St. Augustine, found the key to all events in a Divine Will controlling and overruling the course of human destinies by a constant exercise of superhuman power. Even Comte "ascribed a hardly less resistible power to a Providence of his own construction, directing present events along a groove cut ever more and more deeply for them by the past." And Mr. John Morley admits that "whether you accept Bossuet's theory or Comte's—whether men be their own Providence, or no more than instruments or secondary agents in other hands—this classification of either Providence equally deserves study and meditation."

Thus, though the Jews were a small and insignificant people—though their kings were mere local sheykhs in comparison with the Pharaohs, or the kings of Assyria and Babylon; though they had none of that sense of beauty which gave immortality to the arts of Greece;

though their temple was an altogether trivial structure when compared with the Parthenon or the Serapeum; though they had no drama which can be distantly compared with the Oresteia of Æschylus, and no epic which can be put beside the Iliad or the Nibelungen; though they had nothing which can be dignified with the name of a system of Philosophy—yet their influence on the human race—rendered permanent by their literature, or by that fragment of it which we call "The Books" as though there were none other in the world worth speaking of—has been more powerful than that of all nations upon the development of humanity. Millions have known the names of David or Isaiah, who never so much as heard of Sesostris or of Plato. The influence of the Hebrew race upon mankind has been a moral and a religious influence. Leaving Christianity out of sight—though Christianity itself was nursed in the cradle of Judaism, and was the fulfilment of the Messianic idea which was the most characteristic element in the ancient religion of the Hebrews—the history of Israel is more widely known a million-fold than any history of any people. Professor Huxley is an unsuspected witness to this truth. He has declared that he knows of no other work in the world by the study of which children could be so much humanised, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between the two eternities. What other nation has contributed to the treasure of human thought elements so immeasurably important as the idea of monotheism, and the Ten Commandments, and the high spiritual teaching by which the prophets brought home to the consciousness of our race the nearness, the holiness, and the love of God? We do not underrate the

alue of Eternal Inspiration in the "richly-variegated wisdom" which "multifariously and fragmentarily" the Creator has vouchsafed to man; but the Jews will ever be the most interesting of nations, chiefly because to them were entrusted the oracles of God.[1]

[1] See Stade, i. 1-8.

BOOK II.

DAVID AND SOLOMON.

CHAPTER VII.

DAVID'S DECREPITUDE.

1 KINGS i. 1—4.

"Praise a fair day at night."

THE old age of good men is often a beautiful spectacle. They show us the example of a mellower wisdom, a larger tolerance, a sweeter temper, a more unselfish sympathy, a clearer faith. The setting sun of their bright day tinges even the clouds which gather round it with softer and more lovely hues.

We cannot say this of David's age. After the oppressive splendour of his heroic youth and manhood there was no dewy twilight of honoured peace. We see him in a somewhat pitiable decrepitude. He was not really old; the expression of our Authorised Version, "stricken in years," is literally "entered into days," but the Book of Chronicles calls him "old and full of days."[1] Josephus says that when he died he was only seventy years old. He had reigned seven years and a half in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.[2] At the age of seventy many men are still in full vigour of strength and intellect, but the conditions of that day were not favourable to longevity. Solomon does not seem to have survived his sixtieth year; and it is doubtful whether any one of the kings of Israel or

[1] 1 Chron. xxiii. 1. [2] 2 Sam. v. 5.

Judah—excepting, strange to say, the wicked Manasseh—attained even that moderate age. Threescore years and ten have always been the allotted space of human life, and few who long survive that age find that their strength then is anything but labour and sorrow.

But the decrepitude of David was exceptional. He was drained of all his vital force. He took to his bed, but though they heaped clothes upon him he could get no warmth. "He remained cold amid the torrid heat of Jerusalem." Then his physicians recommended the only remedy they knew, to give heat to his chilled and withered frame. It was the primitive and not ineffectual remedy—which was suggested twenty-two centuries later to the great Frederic Barbarossa—of contact with the warmth of a youthful frame.[1] So they sought out the fairest virgin in all the coasts of Israel to act as the king's nurse, and their choice fell on Abishag, a maiden of Shunem in Issachar.[2] There was no question of his taking another wife. He had already many wives and concubines, and what the bed-ridden invalid required was a strong and youthful nurse to cherish him. We are surprised at such total failure of life's forces. But David had lived through a youth of toil and exposure, of fight and hardship, in the days when his only home had been the dark and dripping limestone caves, and he had been hunted like a partridge on the mountains by the furious jealousy of Saul. The sun had smitten him by day and the moon by night,

[1] It is mentioned by Galen, vii.; Valesius, *De Sacr. Philos.*, xxix., p. 187; Bacon, *Hist. Vitæ et Mortis*, ix. 25; Reinhard, *Bibel-Krankheiten*, p. 171. See Josephus, *Antt.*, VII. xv. 3.

[2] Now Solam, near *Zerin* (Jezreel), five miles south of Tabor (Robinson, *Researches*, iii. 462), on the south-west of Jebel el-Duhy (Little Hermon), Josh. xix. 18; 1 Sam. xxviii. 4.

and the chill dews had fallen on him in the midnight bivouacs among the crags of Engedi. Then had followed the burdens and cares of royalty with guilty anxieties and deeds which shook his pulses with wrath and fear. Coincident with these were the demoralising luxuries and domestic sensualism of a polygamous palace. Worst of all, he had sinned against God, and against light, and against his own conscience. For a time his moral sense had slumbered, and retribution had been delayed. But when he awoke from his sensual dream, the belated punishment burst over him in thunder and his conscience with outstretched finger and tones of menace must often have repeated to the murderous adulterer the doom of Nathan and the stern sentence, "Thou art the man!" Many a vulgar Eastern tyrant would hardly have regarded David's sin as a sin at all; but when such a man as David sins, the fact that he has been admitted into a holier sanctuary adds deadliness to the guilt of his sacrilege. True he was forgiven, but he must have found it terribly hard to forgive himself. God gave back to him the clean heart, and renewed a right spirit within him; but the sense of forgiveness differs from the sweetness of innocence, and the remission of his sins did not bring with it the remission of their consequences. From that disastrous day David was a changed man. It might be said of him as of the Fallen Spirit:—

> "His face
> Deep scars of thunder had entrenched, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek."

The Nemesis of sin's normal consequences pursued him to the end. Dark spirits walked in his house. Joab knew his guilty secrets, and Joab became the tyrannous master of his destiny. Those guilty secrets

leaked out, and he lost his charm, his influence, his popularity among his subjects. He was haunted by an ever-present sense of shame and humiliation. Joab was a murderer, and went unpunished; but was not he too an unpunished murderer? If his enemies cursed him, he sometimes felt with a sense of despair, "Let them curse. God hath said unto them, Curse David." His past carried with it the inevitable deterioration of his present. In the overwhelming shame and horror which rent his heart during the rebellion of Absalom, he must often have felt tempted to the fatalism of desperation, like that guilty king of Greek tragedy who, burdened with the curse of his race, was forced to exclaim,—

"Ἐπει τὸ πρᾶγμα καρτ' ἐπισπέρχει θεὸς
Ἴτω κατ' οὖρον, κῦμα Κωκυτοῦ λαχόν,
Θεῷ στυγηθὲν πᾶν το Λαΐου γένος." [1]

Curses in his family, a curse upon his daughter, a curse upon his sons, a curse upon himself, a curse upon his people,—there was scarcely one ingredient in the cup of human woe which, in consequence of his own crimes, this unhappy king had not been forced to taste. Scourges of war, famine, and pestilence—of a three years' famine, of a three years' flight before his enemies, of a three days' pestilence—he had known them all. He had suffered with the sufferings of his subjects, whose trials had been aggravated by his own transgressions. He had seen his sons following his own fatal example, and he had felt the worst of all sufferings in the serpent's tooth of filial ingratitude agonising a troubled heart and a weakened will. It is no wonder that David became decrepit before his time.

Yet what a picture does he present of the vanity

[1] Æsch., *Sept. c. Theb.*, 690.

of human wishes, of the emptiness of all that men desire, of the truth which Solon impressed on the Lydian king that we can call no man happy before his death! David's youth had been a pastoral idyll; his manhood an epic of war and chivalry; his premature age becomes the chronicle of a nursery. What different pictures are presented to us by David in his sweet youth and glowing bloom, and David in his unloved and disgraced decline! We have seen him a beautiful ruddy boy, summoned from his sheepfolds, with the wind of the desert on his cheek and its sunlight in his hair, to kneel before the aged prophet and feel the hands of consecration laid upon his head. Swift and strong, his feet like hart's feet, his arms able to bend a bow of steel, he fights like a good shepherd for his flock, and single-handed smites the lion and the bear His harp and song drive the evil spirit from the tortured soul of the demoniac king. With a sling and a stone the boy slays the giant champion, and the maidens of Israel praise their deliverer with songs and dances. He becomes the armour-bearer of the king, the beloved comrade of the king's son, the husband of the king's daughter. Then indeed he is driven into imperilled outlawry by the king's envy, and becomes the captain of a band of freebooters; but his influence over them, as in our English legends of Robin Hood, gives something of beneficence to his lawlessness, and even these wandering years of brigandage are brightened by tales of his splendid magnanimity. The young chieftain who had mingled a loyal tenderness and genial humour with all his wild adventures—who had so generously and almost playfully spared the life of Saul his enemy—who had protected the flocks and fields of the churlish Nabal—who, with the chivalry

of a Sydney, had poured on the ground the bright drops of water from the Well of Bethlehem for which he had thirsted, because they had been won by imperilled lives—sprang naturally into the idolised hero and poet of his people. Then God had taken him from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes great with young ones, that he might lead Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. Generous to the sad memories of Saul and Jonathan, generous to the princely Abner, generous to the weak Ishbosheth, generous to poor lame Mephibosheth, he had knit all hearts like the heart of one man to himself, and in successful war had carried all before him, north and south, and east and west. He enlarged the borders of his kingdom, captured the City of Waters, and placed the Moloch-crown of Rabbah on his head. Then in the mid-flush of his prosperity, in his pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, "the tempting opportunity met the susceptible disposition," and David forgat God who had done so great things for him.

The people must have felt how deep was the debt of gratitude which they owed to him. He had given them a consciousness of power yet undeveloped; a sense of the unity of their national life perpetuated by the possession of a capital which has been famous to all succeeding ages. To David the nation owed the conquest of the stronghold of Jebus, and they would feel that "as the hills stand about Jerusalem so standeth the Lord round about them that fear Him."[1] The king who associates his name with a national capital—as Nebuchadnezzar built great Babylon, or Constantine chose Byzantium—secures the strongest claim to immortality. But the

[1] See Psalm cxxii. 3-5.

choice made by David for his capital showed an intuiti
as keen as that which has immortalised the fam
the Macedonian conqueror in the name of Alexandria
Jerusalem is a city which belongs to all time, and ever
under the curse of Turkish rule it has not lost its
undying interest. But David had rendered a still
higher service in giving stability to the national religion
The prestige of the Ark had been destroyed in the
overwhelming defeat of Israel by the Philistines at
Aphek, when it fell into the hands of the uncircumcised.
After that it had been neglected and half forgotten until
David brought it with songs and dances to God's holy
hill of Zion. Since then every pious Israelite might
rejoice that, as in the Tabernacle of old, God was once
more in the midst of His people. The merely super-
stitious might only regard the Ark as a fetish—the fated
Palladium of the national existence. But to all thought-
ful men the presence of the Ark had a deeper meaning,
for it enshrined the Tables of the Moral Law; and those
broken Tables, and the bending Cherubim which gazed
down upon them, and the blood-sprinkled gold of the
Mercy-Seat were a vivid emblem that God's Will is the
Rule of Righteousness, and that if it be broken the soul
must be reconciled to Him by repentance and forgive-
ness. That meaning is beautifully brought out in the
Psalm which says, "Who shall ascend into the hill of
the Lord, or who shall rise up into the holy place?
Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart: who
hath not lifted up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to
deceive his neighbour."

To David more than to any man that conviction of
the supremacy of righteousness must have been keenly
present, and for this reason his sin was the less
pardonable. It "tore down the altar of confidence"

in many hearts. It caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and was therefore worthy of a sorer punishment. And God in His mercy smote, and did not spare.

He sinned: then came earthquake and eclipse. His earthly life was shipwrecked in that place where two seas meet—where the sea of calamity meets the sea of crime.[1] Then followed the death of his infant child; the outrage of Amnon; the blood of the brutal ravisher shed by his brother's hands; the flight of Absalom; his insolence, his rebellion, his deadly insult to his father's household; the long day of flight and shame and weeping and curses, as David ascended the slope of Olivet and went down into the Valley of Jordan; the sanguinary battle; the cruel murder of the beloved rebel; the insolence of Joab; the heartrending cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Not even then had David's trials ended. He had to endure the fierce quarrel between Israel and Judah; the rebellion of Sheba; the murder of Amasa, which he dared not punish. He had to sink into the further sin of pride in numbering the people, and to see the Angel of the Plague standing with drawn sword over the threshing-floor of Araunah, while his people—those sheep who had not offended—died around him by thousands. After such a life he was made to feel that it was not for blood-stained hands like his to rear the Temple, though he had said, "I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep nor mine eyelids to slumber, neither the temples of my head to take any rest till I find a place for the tabernacle of the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." And now we see him surrounded

[1] See Kittel, ii. 147.

by intrigues; alienated from the friends and advisers of his youth; shivering in his sick-room; attended by his nurse; feeble, apathetic, the ghost and wreck of all that he had been, with little left him of his life but its "glimmerings and decays."

It is an oft-repeated story. Even so we see great Darius

> "Deserted at his utmost need
> By those his former bounty fed;
> On the bare ground exposed he lies
> Without a friend to close his eyes."

So we see glorious Alexander the Great, dying as a fool dieth, remorseful, drunken, disappointed, at Babylon. So we see our great Plantagenet:—

> "Mighty victor, mighty lord,
> Low on his funeral couch he lies!
> No pitying heart, no eye afford
> A tear to grace his obsequies."

So we see Louis XIV., *le grand monarque*, peevish, *ennuyé*, fortunate no longer, an old man of seventy-seven left in his vast lonely palace with his great-grandson, a frivolous child of five, and saying to him, "*J'ai trop aime la guerre; ne m'imitez point.*" So we see the last great conqueror of modern times, embittering his dishonoured island-exile by miserable disputes with Sir Hudson Lowe about etiquette and champagne. But among all the "sad stories of the deaths of kings" none ends a purer glory with a more pitiful decline than the poet-king of Israel, whose songs have been to so many thousands their delight in the house of their pilgrimage. Truly David's experience no less than his own may have added bitterness to the traditional epitaph of his son on all human glory: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EASTERN COURT AND HOME.

1 KINGS i.

"Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness."—EZEK xvi. 49.

A MAN does not choose his own destiny; it is ordained for higher ends than his own personal happiness. If David could have made his choice, he might, indeed, have been dazzled by the glittering lure of royalty; yet he would have been in all probability happier and nobler had he never risen above the simple life of his forefathers. Our saintly king in Shakespeare's tragedy says:—

> "My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
> Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,
> Nor to be seen. My crown is called Content;
> And crown it is which seldom kings enjoy."

David assuredly did not enjoy that crown. After his establishment at Jerusalem it is doubtful whether he could count more happy days than Abderrahman the Magnificent, who recorded that amid a life honoured in peace and victorious in war he could not number more than fourteen.

We admire the generous freebooter more than we admire the powerful king. As time went on he showed

a certain deterioration of character, the inevitable result of the unnatural conditions to which he had succumbed. Saul was a king of a very simple type. No pompous ceremonials separated him from the simple intercourse of natural kindliness. He did not tower over the friends of his youth like a Colossus, and look down on his superiors from the artificial elevation of his inch-high dignity. "In himself was all his state," and there was something kinglier in his simple majesty when he stood under his pomegranate at Migron, with his huge javelin in his hand, than in

> "The tedious pomp which waits
> On princes, when their rich retinue long
> Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold
> Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape."

We should not have assumed beforehand that there was anything in David's character which rendered external pomp and ceremony attractive to him. But the inherent flunkeyism of Eastern servility made his courtiers feed him with adulation, and approach him with genuflexions. Apparently he could not rise superior to the slowly corrupting influences of autocracy which gradually assimilated the court of the once simple warrior to that of his vulgar compeers on the neighbouring thrones. There is something startling to see what a chasm royalty has cleft between him and the comrades of his adversity, and even the partner of his guilt who had become his favourite queen. We see it throughout the story of the last scenes in which he plays a part. He can only be addressed with periphrases and in the third person. "Let there be sought for *my lord the king* a young virgin; and let her stand before *the king*, and let her lie in thy bosom, that *my lord the king* may get heat." Bathsheba can only speak

to him in such terms as, "Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thy handmaid?" and even she, when she enters the sick-chamber of his decrepitude, prostrates herself and does obeisance. Every other word of her speech is interlarded with "my lord the king," and "my lord, O king"; and when she leaves "the presence" she again bows herself with her face to the earth, and does reverence to the king[1] with the words, 'May my lord, King David, live for ever." The anointed dignity of the prophet who had once so boldly rebuked David's worst crime does not exempt him from the same ceremonial, and he too goes into the inner chamber bowing his face before the king to the earth.

Insensibly David must have come to require it all, and to like it. Yet the unsophisticated instincts of his more natural youth would surely have revolted from it. He would have deprecated it as sternly as the Greek conqueror in the mighty tragedy who hates to walk to his throne on purple tapestries, and says to his queen :—

> "Ope not the mouth to me, nor cry amain
> As at the footstool of a man of the East,
> Prone on the ground: so stoop not thou to me;"

or, as another has more literally rendered it:—

> "Nor like some barbarous man
> Gape thou upon me an earth-grovelling howl."[2]

But the royal position of David brought with it a surer curse than that which follows the extreme exal-

[1] The same word is rendered "worship" in Psalm xlv. 11. Comp. 2 Sam. ix. 6; Esth. iii. 2-5. In 1 Chron. xxix. 20 we are told that the people "*worshipped*" the Lord and the king.

[2] "Μηδὲ βαρβάρου φωτὸς δίκην
Χαμαιπετὴς βόαμα προσχανῃς ἐμοί."
Æsch., *Agam.*, 887.

tation of a man above his fellows. It brought with it the permitted luxury or imaginary necessity for polygamy, and the man-enervating, woman-degrading paraphernalia of an Eastern harem. Jesse and Boaz, in their paternal fields at Bethlehem, had been content with one wife, and had known the true joys of love and home. But monogamy was thought unsuitable to the new grandeur of a despot, and under the curse of polygamy the joy of love, the peace of home, are inevitably blighted. In that condition man gives up the sweetest sources of earthly blessing for the meanest gratifications of animal sensuousness. Love, when it is pure and true, gilds the life of man with a joy of heaven, and fills it with a breath of Paradise. It renders life more perfect and more noble by the union of two souls, and fulfils the original purpose of creation. A home, blessed by life's most natural sanctities, becomes a saving ark in days of storm.

> "Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
> His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
> Reigns here and revels."

But in a polygamous household a home is exchanged for a troubled establishment, and love is carnalised into a jaded appetite. The Eastern king becomes the slave of every wandering fancy, and can hardly fail to be a despiser of womanhood, which he sees only on its ignoblest side. His home is liable to be torn by mutual jealousies and subterranean intrigues, and many a foul and midnight murder has marked, and still marks, the secret history of Eastern seraglios. The women—idle, ignorant, uneducated, degraded, intriguing—with nothing to think of but gossip, scandal, spite, and animal passion; hating each other worst of all, and each

engaged in the fierce attempt to reign supreme in the affection which she cannot monopolise—spend wasted lives of *ennui* and slavish degradation. Eunuchs, the vilest products of the most corrupted civilisation, soon make their loathly appearance in such courts, and add the element of morbid and rancorous effeminacy to the general ferment of corruption. Polygamy, as it is a contravention of God's original design, enfeebles the man, degrades the woman, corrupts the slave, and destroys the home. David introduced it into the Southern Kingdom, and Ahab into the Northern;—both with the most calamitous effects.

Polygamy produces results worse than all the others upon the children born in such families. Murderous rivalry often reigns between them, and fraternal affection is almost unknown. The children inherit the blood of deteriorated mothers, and the sons of different wives burn with the mutual animosities of the harem, under whose shadowing influence they have been brought up. When Napoleon was asked the greatest need of France, he answered in the one laconic word, "*Mothers*"; and when he was asked the best training ground for recruits, he said, "*The nurseries, of course.*" Much of the manhood of the East shows the taint and blight which it has inherited from such mothers and such nurseries as seraglios alone can form.

The darkest elements of a polygamous household showed themselves in the unhappy family of David. The children of the various wives and concubines saw but little of their father during their childish years. David could only give them a scanty and much-divided attention when they were brought to him to display their beauty. They grew up as children, the spoiled and petted playthings of women and debased attendants,

with nothing to curb their rebellious passions or check their imperious wills. The little influence over them which David exercised was unhappily not for good. He was a man of tender affections. He repeated the errors of which he might have been warned by the effects of foolish indulgence on Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, and even on the sons of the guide of his youth, the prophet Samuel. The wild careers of David's elder sons show that they had inherited his strong passions and eager ambition, and that in their case, as well as Adonijah's, he had not displeased them at any time in saying, "Why hast thou done so?"

The consequences which followed had been frightful beyond precedent. David must have learnt by experience the truth of the exhortation, "Desire not a multitude of unprofitable children, neither delight in ungodly sons. Though they multiply, rejoice not in them, except the fear of the Lord be with them: for one that is just is better than a thousand; and better it is to die without children, than to have those that are ungodly."[1]

David's eldest son was Amnon, the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel; his second Daniel or Chileab, son of Abigail, the wife of Nabal of Carmel; the third Absalom, son of Maacah, daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur; the fourth Adonijah, the son of Haggith. Shephatiah and Ithream were the sons of two other wives, and these six sons were born to David in Hebron. When he became king in Jerusalem he had four sons by Bath-

[1] Ecclus. xvi. 1-3. He must have had at least twenty sons, and at least one daughter (2 Sam. iii. 1-5, v. 14-16; 1 Chron. iii. 1-9, xiv. 3-7. Josephus again (*Antt.*, VII. iii. 3) has a different list.

sheba, born after the one that died in his infancy, and at least nine other sons by various wives, besides his daughter Tamar, sister of Absalom. He had other sons by his concubines. Most of these sons are unknown to fame. Some of them probably died in childhood. He provided for others by making them priests.[1] His line, down to the days of Jeconiah, was continued in the descendants of Solomon, and afterwards in those of the otherwise unknown Nathan. The elder sons, born to him in the days of his more fervent youth, became the authors of the tragedies which laid waste his house. They were youths of splendid beauty, and, as they bore the proud title of "the king's sons," they were from their earliest years encircled by luxury and adulation.[2]

Amnon regarded himself as the heir to the throne, and his fierce passions brought the first infamy into the family of David. By the aid of his cousin Jonadab, the wily son of Shimmeah, the king's brother, he brutally dishonoured his half-sister Tamar, and then as brutally drove the unhappy princess from his presence. It was David's duty to inflict punishment on his shameless heir, but he weakly condoned the crime. Absalom dissembled his vengeance for two whole years, and spoke to his brother neither good nor evil. At the end of that time he invited David and all the princes to a

[1] *Kohanim.*

[2] From the fact that his son Eliada (2 Sam. v. 16) is called Beeliada (*i.e.*, "Baal knows") in 1 Chron. xiv. 7, it is surely a precarious inference that "now and then he paid his homage to some Baal, perhaps to please one of his foreign wives" (Van Oort, *Bible for Young People*, iii. 84). The true explanation seems to be that at one time Baal, "Lord," was not regarded as an unauthorised title for Jehovah. The fact that David once had *teraphim* in his house (1 Sam. xix. 13, 16) shows that his advance in knowledge was gradual.

joyous sheep-shearing festival at Baal Hazor. David, as he anticipated, declined the invitation, on the plea that his presence would burden his son with needless expense. Then Absalom asked that, as the king could not honour his festival, at least his brother Amnon, as the heir to the throne, might be present. David's heart misgave him, but he could refuse nothing to the youth whose magnificent and faultless beauty filled him with an almost doting pride, and Amnon and all the princes went to the feast. No sooner was Amnon's heart inflamed with wine, than, at a preconcerted signal, Absalom's servants fell on him and murdered him. The feast broke up in tumultuous horror, and in the wild cry and rumour which arose the heart of David was torn with the intelligence that Absalom had murdered all his brothers. He rent his clothes, and lay weeping in the dust surrounded by his weeping servants. But Jonadab assured him that only Amnon had been murdered in revenge for his unpunished outrage, and a rush of people along the road, among whom the princes were visible riding on their mules, confirmed his words. But the deed was still black enough. Bathed in tears, and raising the wild cries of Eastern grief, the band of youthful princes stood round the father whose incestuous firstborn had thus fallen by a brother's hand, and the king also and all his servants "wept greatly with a great weeping."

Absalom fled to his grandfather the King of Geshur; but his purpose had been doubly accomplished. He had avenged the shame of his sister, and he was now himself the eldest son and heir to the throne.[1] His claim was strengthened by the superb physique and

[1] Chileab was either dead, or was of no significance.

beautiful hair of which he was so proud, and which won the hearts both of king and people. Capable, ambitious, secure of ultimate pardon, the son and the grandson of a king, he lived for three years at the court of his grandfather. Then Joab, perceiving that David was consoled for the death of Amnon, and that his heart was yearning for his favourite son,[1] obtained the intercession of the wise woman of Tekoah, and got permission for Absalom to return. But his offence had been terrible, and to his extreme mortification the king refused to admit him. Joab, though he had manœuvred for his return, did not come near him, and twice refused to visit him when summoned to do so. With characteristic insolence the young man obtained an interview by ordering his servants to set fire to Joab's field of barley. By Joab's request the king once more saw Absalom, and, as the youth felt sure would be the case, raised him from the ground, kissed, forgave, and restored him to favour.

For the favour of his weakly-fond father he cared little; what he wanted was the throne. His proud beauty, his royal descent on both sides, fired his ambition. Eastern peoples are always ready to concede pre-eminence to splendid men. This had helped to win the kingdom for stately Saul and ruddy David; for the Jews, like the Greeks, thought that "loveliness of person involves the blossoming promises of future excellence, and is, as it were, a prelude of riper beauty."[2] It seemed intolerable to this prince in the zenith of glorious life that he should be kept out of his royal inheritance by one whom he described as a useless

[1] 2 Sam. xiii. 39. "The soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom."

[2] Max. Tyr., *Dissert.*, 9 (Keil, *ad loc.*).

dotard. By his personal fascination, and by base intrigues against David, founded on the king's imperfect fulfilment of his duties as judge, "he stole the hearts of the children of Israel." After four years[1] everything was ripe for revolt. He found that for some unexplained reason the tribe of Judah and the old capital of Hebron were disaffected to David's rule. He got leave to visit Hebron in pretended fulfilment of a vow, and so successfully raised the standard of revolt that David, his family, and his followers had to fly hurriedly from Jerusalem with bare feet and cheeks bathed in tears along the road of the Perfumers. Of that long day of misery—to the description of which more space is given in Scripture than to that of any other day except that of the Crucifixion—we need not speak, nor of the defeat of the rebellion. David was saved by the adhesion of his warrior-corps (the *Gibborim*) and his mercenaries (the Krêthi and Plêthi). Absalom's host was routed. He was in some strange way entangled in the branches of a tree as he fled on his mule through the forest of Rephaim.[2] As he hung helpless there, Joab, with needless cruelty, drove three wooden staves through his body in revenge for his past insolence, leaving his armour-bearer to despatch the miserable fugitive. To this day every Jewish child flings a contumelious stone at the pillar in the King's Dale, which bears the traditional name of David's Son, the beautiful and bad.[3]

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[1] In 2 Sam. xv. 7 we should certainly alter "forty" into four.

[2] Rephaim seems a more probable reading than Ephraim in 2 Sam. xviii. 6; see Josh. xvii. 15, 18. Yet the name "Ephraim" may have been given to this transjordanic wood. The notion that he *hung by his hair* is only a conjecture, and not a probable one.

[3] His three sons had pre-deceased him; his beautiful daughter Tamar (2 Sam. xiv. 27) became the wife of Rehoboam. She is called

The days which followed were thickly strewn with calamities for the rapidly ageing and heart-broken king. His helpless decline was yet to be shaken by the attempted usurpation of another bad son.

Maachah in 1 Kings xv. 2, and the LXX. addition to 2 Sam. xiv. 27 says that she bore both names. The so-called tomb of Absalom in the Valley of Hebron is of Asmonæan and Herodian origin.

CHAPTER IX.

ADONIJAH'S REBELLION.

1 KINGS i. 5—53.

"The king's word hath power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?"—ECCLES. viii. 4.

THE fate of Amnon and of Absalom might have warned the son who was now the eldest, and who had succeeded to their claims.

Adonijah was the son of Haggith, "the dancer." His father had piously given him the name, which means "Jehovah is my Lord." He, too, was "a very goodly man," treated by David with foolish indulgence, and humoured in all his wishes. Although the rights of primogeniture were ill-defined, a king's eldest son, endowed as Adonijah was, would naturally be looked on as the heir; and Adonijah was impatient for the great prize. Following the example of Absalom "he exalted himself, saying, I will be king," and, as an unmistakable sign of his intentions, prepared for himself fifty runners with chariots and horsemen.[1] David, unwarned by the past, or perhaps too ill and secluded to be aware of what was going on, put no obstacle in his way. The people in general were tired of David, though the

[1] Morier tells us that in Persia "runners" before the king's horses are an indispensable adjunct of his state.

spell of his name was still great. Adonijah's cause seemed safe when he had won over Joab, the commander of the forces, and Abiathar, the chief priest. But the young man's precipitancy spoiled everything. David lingered on. It was perhaps a palace-secret that a strong court-party was in favour of Solomon, and that David was inclined to leave his kingdom to this younger son by his favourite wife. So Adonijah, once more imitating the tactics of Absalom, prepared a great feast at the Dragon-stone by the Fullers' Well, in the valley below Jerusalem.[1] He sacrificed sheep and fat oxen and cattle, and invited all the king's fifteen sons, omitting Solomon, from whom alone he had any rivalry to fear. To this feast he also invited Joab and Abiathar, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants, by which are probably intended "all the captains of the host" who formed the nucleus of the militia forces.[2] At this feast Adonijah threw off the mask. In open rebellion against David, his followers shouted, "God save king Adonijah!"

The watchful eye of one man—the old prophet-statesman, Nathan—saw the danger. Adonijah was thirty-five; Solomon was comparatively a child. "Solomon, my son," says David, "is young and tender."[3] What his age was at the date of Adonijah's rebellion we do not know. Josephus says that he was only twelve,

[1] The Stone of Zoheleth, probably a sacred stone—one of the numerous isolated rocks of Palestine; is not mentioned elsewhere. The Fullers' Fountain is mentioned in Josh. xv. 7, xviii. 16; 2 Sam. xvii. 17. It was south-east of Jerusalem, and is perhaps identical with "Job's Fountain," where the wadies of Kedron and Hinnom meet (*Palestine Exploration Fund*, 1874, p. 80).

[2] Comp. 1 Kings i. 9-25.

[3] The same phrase is used of Rehoboam (2 Chron. xii. 13, xiii. 7) when he was twenty-one, reading כא for מא, forty-one.

and this would well accord with the fact that he seems to have taken no step on his own behalf, while Nathan and Bathsheba act for him. It accords less well with the calm magnanimity and regal decisiveness which he displayed from the first day that he was seated on the throne. The Greek proverb says, *Ἀρχὴ ἄνδρα δείκνυσιν*, "Power shows the man." Perhaps Solomon, hitherto concealed in the seclusion of the harem, was, up to this time, ignorant of himself as well as unknown to the people. Being unaware of the boy's capacity, many were taken in by the more showy gifts of the handsome Adonijah, whose age might seem to promise greater stability to the kingdom.

But Solomon from his birth upwards had been Nathan's special charge.[1] No sooner had he been born than David had entrusted the infant to the care of the man who had awakened his slumbering conscience to the heinousness of his offence, and had prophesied his punishment in the death of the child of adultery. An oracle had forbidden him to build the Temple because his hands were stained with blood, but had promised him a son who should be a man of rest, and in whose days Israel should have peace and quietness.[2] Long before, in Hebron, David, yearning for peace, had called his eldest son Absalom ("the father of peace"). To the second son of Bathsheba, whom he regarded

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 25: "And he sent by the hand of Nathan, the prophet; he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord" (A.V.). The verse is somewhat obscure. It either means that David sent the child to Nathan to be brought up under his guardianship, or sent Nathan to ask of the oracle the favour of some well-omened name (Ewald, iii. 168). Nathan was perhaps akin to David. The Rabbis absurdly identify him with Jonathan (1 Chron. xxvii. 32; 2 Sam. xxi. 21), nephew of David, son of Shimmeah.

[2] 1 Chron. xxii. 6-9.

as the heir of oracular promise, he gave the sounding name of Shelōmoh ("the Peaceful").[1] But Nathan, perhaps with reference to David's own name of "the Beloved," had called the child Jedidiah ("the beloved of Jehovah").

The secret of his destiny was probably known to few, though it was evidently suspected by Adonijah. To have proclaimed it in a crowded harem would have been to expose the child to the perils of poison, and to have doomed him to certain death if one of his unruly brothers succeeded in seizing the royal authority. The oath to Bathsheba that her son should succeed must have been a secret known at the time to Nathan only. It is evident that David had never taken any step to secure its fulfilment.

The crisis was one of extreme peril. Nathan was now old. He had perhaps sunk into the courtly complaisance which, content with one bold rebuke, ceased to deal faithfully with David. He had at any rate left it to Gad the Seer to reprove him for numbering the people. Now, however, he rose to the occasion, and by a prompt *coup d'état* caused the instant collapse of Adonijah's conspiracy.

Adonijah had counted on the jealousy of the tribe of Judah, on the king's seclusion and waning popularity, on the support of "all the captains of the host," on the acquiescence of all the other princes, and above all on the favour of the ecclesiastical and military power of the kingdom as represented by Abiathar and Joab. To Solomon himself, as yet a shadowy figure and so much

[1] LXX., Σαλωμών, and in Ecclus. xlvii. 13. Comp. Shelōmith (Lev xxiv. 11), Shelōmi (Num. xxxiv. 27). But it became Σαλόμων in the New Testament, Josephus, the Sibylline verses, etc. The long vowel is retained in Salōme and in the Arabic Sūleyman, etc.

younger, he attached no importance. He treated his aged father as a cipher, and Nathan as of no particular account.[1] He overlooked the influence of Bathsheba, the prestige which attached to the nomination of a reigning king, and above all the resistance of the body-guard of mercenaries and their captain Benaiah.

Nathan had no sooner received tidings of what was going on at Adonijah's feast than he shook off his lethargy and hurried to Bathsheba. She seems to have retained the same sort of influence over David that Madame de Maintenon exercised over the aged Louis XIV. "Had she heard," asked Nathan, "that Adonijah's coronation was going on at that moment? Let her hurry to King David, and inquire whether he had given any sanction to proceedings which contravened the oath which he had given her that her son Solomon should be his heir." As soon as she had broken the intelligence to the king, he would come and confirm her words.[2]

Bathsheba did not lose a moment. She knew that if

[1] Among Solomon's adherents are mentioned "Shimei and Rei" (1 Kings i. 8), whom Ewald supposes to stand for two of David's brothers, Shimma and Raddai, and Stade to be two officers of the Gibborim. Thenius adopts a reading partly suggested by Josephus, "Hushai, the friend of David." Others identify Rei with Ira; a Shimei, the son of Elah, is mentioned among Solomon's governors (*Nitzabim*, 1 Kings iv. 18); and there was a Shimei of Ramah over David's vineyards (1 Chron. xxvii. 27). The name was common, and meant "famous."

[2] Duncker, Meyer, Wellhausen, Stade, regard Solomon's accession as due to a mere palace intrigue of Nathan and Bathsheba, and David's dying injunctions as only intended to excuse Solomon. They treat 1 Kings ii. 1-12 as a Deuteronomic interpolation. Dillmann, Kittel, Kuenen, Budde, rightly reject this view. Stade says, "Nach menschlichen Gefühl, ein Unrecht war die Salbung Salomos." He thinks that "the aged David was over-influenced by the intrigues of the harem and the court" (i. 292).

Adonijah's conspiracy succeeded her own life and that of her son might not be worth a day's purchase. The helplessness of David's condition is shown by the fact that she had to make her way into "the inner chamber" to visit him. In violation of the immemorial etiquette of an Eastern household, she spoke to him without being summoned, and in the presence of another woman, Abishag, his fair young nurse. With profound obeisances she entered, and told the poor old hero that Adonijah had practically usurped the throne, but that the eyes of all Israel were awaiting his decision as to who should be his successor. She asked whether he was really indifferent to the peril of herself and of Solomon, for Adonijah's success would mean their doom.[1]

While she yet spoke Nathan was announced, as had been concerted between them, and he repeated the story of what was going on at Adonijah's feast. It is remarkable that he says nothing to David either about consulting the Urim, or in any way ascertaining the will of God. He and Bathsheba rely exclusively on four motives—David's rights of nomination, his promise, the danger to Solomon, and the contempt shown in Adonijah's proceedings. "The whole incident," says Reuss, "is swayed by the ordinary movements of passion and interest."[2] The news woke in David a flash of his old energy. With instant decision he summoned Bathsheba, who, as custom required, had left the chamber when Nathan entered. Using his strong

[1] She said that they would be counted as "offenders" (*chattaim*) Comp. 1 Kings i. 12, where Nathan assumes that they will both be put to death. Thus Cassander put to death Roxana, the widow of Alexander the Great, and her son Alexander (Justin., xv. 2).

[2] Reuss, *Hist. des Israelites*, i. 409.

and favourite adjuration, "As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,"[1] he pledged himself to carry out that very day the oath that Solomon should be his heir. She bowed her face to the earth in adoration with the words, "Let my lord, King David, live for ever." He then summoned Zadok, the second priest, Nathan, and Benaiah, and told them what to do. They were to take the body-guard[2] which was under Benaiah's command, to place Solomon on the king's own she-mule[3] (which was regarded as the highest honour of all honours), to conduct him down the Valley of Jehoshaphat to Gihon,[4] where the pool would furnish the water for the customary ablutions, to anoint him king, and then to blow the consecrated ram's horn (*shophar*)[5] with the shout, "God save King Solomon!" After this the boy was to be seated on the throne, and proclaimed ruler over Israel and Judah.

Benaiah was one of David's twelve chosen captains, who was placed at the head of one of the monthly courses of 24,000 soldiers in the third month. The chronicler calls him a priest.[6] His available forces made him master of the situation, and he joyfully accepted the commission with, "Amen! So may Jehovah say!" and with the prayer that the throne of Solomon might be even greater than the throne

[1] Comp. 2 Sam. iv. 9; Psalm xix. 14.

[2] "The servants of your Lord." Comp. 2 Sam. xx. 6, 7.

[3] Comp. Gen. xli. 43; 1 Kings i. 33; Esth. vi. 8.

[4] 2 Chron. xxxii. 30, xxxiii. 14. It was apparently "the Virgin's Fountain," east of Jerusalem, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

[5] Comp. 2 Kings ix. 13.

[6] 1 Chron. xxvii. 5, where the true rendering is not "Benaiah the chief priest," as in A.V., nor "principal officer," as in the margin; but "Benaiah the priest, as chief."

of David. Joab was commander-in-chief of the army, but his forces had not been summoned or mobilised. Accustomed to a bygone state of things he had failed to observe that Benaiah's palace-regiment of six hundred picked men could strike a blow long before he was ready for action. These guards were the Krêthi and Plêthi,[1] "executioners and runners," perhaps an alien body of faithful mercenaries originally composed of Cretans and Philistines. They formed a compact body of defenders, always prepared for action. They resemble the Germans of the Roman Emperors, the Turkish Janissaries, the Egyptian Mamelukes, the Byzantian Varangians, or the Swiss Guard of the Bourbons. Their one duty was to be ready at a moment's notice to carry out the king's behests. Such a picked regiment has often held in its hands the prerogative of Empire. They were, originally at any rate, identical with the *Gibborim*,[2] and had been at first commanded by men who had earned rank by personal prowess.

[1] 1 Sam. xxx. 14; Josephus, σωματοφύλακες. The Targum calls them "archers and slingers" (which is unlikely), or "nobles and common soldiers." This body-guard is also said to be composed of Gittites (2 Sam. xv. 18, xviii. 2); but some suppose that they were so called not by nationality, but because they had served under David at Gath. The question is further complicated by the appearance of "Carians" (A.V., captains) in 2 Kings xi. 4, 15, and also in 2 Sam. xx. 23 (Heb.). The Carians were universal mercenaries (Herod., ii. 152; Liv., xxxvii. 40). That there was an early intercourse between Palestine and the West is shown by the fact that such words as peribolory, machaera, macaina, lesche, pellex, have found their way into Hebrew (see Renan, *Hist. du Peuple Israel*, ii. 33).

[2] 2 Sam. xxiii. 8-39; 1 Chron. xi. 10-47; 1 Kings i. 8. The Gibborim are by some supposed to be a different body from the Krêthi and Plêthi (2 Sam. xv. 18, xx. 7); but from 1 Kings i. 8, 10, 38 they seem to be the same (Stade, i. 275). The thirty heroes at their head furnish, as Renan says, the first germ of a sort of "Legion of Honour."

But for their intervention on this occasion Adonijah would have become king.

While Adonijah's followers were wasting time over their turbulent banquet, the younger court-party were carrying out the unexpectedly vigorous suggestions of the aged king. While the eastern hills echoed with "Long live King Adonijah!" the western hills resounded with shouts of "Long live King Solomon!" The young Solomon had been ceremoniously mounted on the king's mule, and the procession had gone down to Gihon. There, with the solemnity which is only mentioned in cases of disputed succession,[1] Nathan the prophet and Zadok as priest anointed the son of Bathsheba with the horn of perfumed oil which the latter had taken from the sacred tent at Zion.[2] These measures had been neglected by Adonijah's party in the precipitation of their plot, and they were regarded as of the utmost importance, as they are in Persia to this day.[3] Then the trumpets blew, and the vast crowd which had assembled shouted, "God save King Solomon!" The people broke into acclamations, and danced, and played on pipes, and the earth rang again with the mighty sound.[4] Adonijah had fancied, and

[1] Saul (1 Sam. x. 1), David (1 Sam. xvi. 13, and twice afterwards, 2 Sam. ii. 4, v. 3), Jehu (1 Kings xix. 16), Joash (2 Chron. xxiii. 11).

[2] 1 Kings i. 39. "Tent," not "tabernacle," as in A.V. It has generally been supposed that Zadok took it from the tabernacle at Gibeon (1 Chron. xvi. 39), but there would have been no time to send so far. Zadok is called a "Seer" in the A.V. (2 Sam. xv. 27); but the true version may be "Seeth thou?" The LXX. and Vulgate omit the words.

[3] Morier, quoted by Stanley, p. 172, says that the Mustched, or chief priest, and the Munajem, or prophet, are always present at a Persian coronation.

[4] LXX., ἐρράγη, ἤχησεν; Vulg., insonuit. Comp. Josephus, *Antt.*, VII. xiv. 3, 5.

he subsequently asserted, that "all Israel set their faces on me that I should reign." But his vanity had misled him. Many of the people may have seen through his shallow character, and may have dreaded the rule of such a king. Others were still attached to David, and were prepared to accept his choice. Others were struck with the grave bearing and the youthful beauty of the son of Bathsheba. The multitude were probably opportunists ready to shout with the winner whoever he might be.

The old warrior Joab, perhaps less dazed with wine and enthusiasm than the other guests of Adonijah, was the first to catch the sound of the trumpet blasts and of the general rejoicing, and to portend its significance. As he started up in surprise the guests caught sight of Jonathan, son of Abiathar, a swift-footed priest who had acted as a spy for David in Jerusalem at Absalom's rebellion,[1] but who now, like his father Abiathar and so many of his betters, had gone over to Adonijah. The prince welcomed him as a "man of worth," one who was sure to bring tidings of good omen;[2] but Jonathan burst out with, "Nay, but our Lord king David hath made Solomon king." He does not seem to have been in a hurry to bring this fatal intelligence; for he had not only waited until the entire ceremony at Gihon was over, but to the close of the enthronisation of Solomon in Jerusalem.[3] He had seen the young king seated on the throne of state in the midst of the jubilant people. David had been carried out upon his

[1] 2 Sam. xv. 27, xvii. 17.

[2] 2 Sam. xviii. 27. Heb., אִישׁ חַי; LXX., ἀνὴρ δυνάμεως; Vulg., vir fortis. It is rather "virtuous," as in Prov. xii. 4.

[3] It is true that Solomon's adherents had wasted no time over a feast.

couch, and, bowing his head in worship before the multitude, had said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it."

This intelligence fell like a thunderbolt among Adonijah's unprepared adherents. A general flight took place, each man being only eager to save himself. The straw fire of their enthusiasm had already flared itself away. Deserted by every one, and fearing to pay the forfeit of his life, Adonijah fled to the nearest sanctuary, where the Ark stood on Mount Zion under the care of his supporter the high priest Abiathar.[1] There he caught hold of the horns of the altar—wooden projections at each of its corners, overlaid with brass. When a sacrifice was offered the animal was tied to these horns of the altar,[2] and they were smeared with the victim's blood just as in after days the propitiatory was sprinkled with the blood of the bull and the goat on the Great Day of Atonement. The mercy-seat thus became a symbol of atonement, and an appeal to God that He would forgive the sinful priest and the sinful nation who came before Him with the blood of expiation. The mercy-seat would have furnished an inviolable sanctuary had it not been enclosed in the Holiest Place, unapproachable by any feet but that of the high priest once a year. The horns of the altar were, however, available for refuge to any offender, and their protection involved an appeal to the mercy of man as to the mercy of God.[3]

[1] 1 Kings i. 50.

[2] Psalm cxviii. 27, and Exod. xxvii. 2 ff., xxix. 12, xxx. 10. Comp. Exod. xxi. 14.

[3] Exod. xxi. 14. It protected the homicide, but not the wilful murderer.

There in wretched plight clung the fallen prince, hurled down in one day from the summit of his ambition. He refused to leave the spot unless King Solomon would first of all swear that he would not slay his servant with the sword.[1] Adonijah saw that all was over with his cause. "God," says the Portuguese proverb, "can write straight on crooked lines;" and as is so often the case, the crisis which brought about His will was the immediate result of an endeavour to defeat it.

Solomon was not one of those Eastern princes who

"Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne."

Many an Eastern king has begun his reign as Baasha, Jehu, and Athaliah did, by the exile, imprisonment, or execution of every possible rival. Adonijah, caught red-handed in an attempt at rebellion, might have been left with some show of justice to starve at the horns of the altar, or to leave his refuge and face the penalty due to crime. But Solomon, unregarded and unknown as he had hitherto been, rose at once to the requirements of his new position, and magnanimously promised his brother a complete amnesty[2] so long as he remained faithful to his allegiance. Adonijah descended the steps of the altar, and having made sacred obeisance to his new sovereign[3] was dismissed with the laconic order,

[1] 1 Kings i. 51. The words "this day" should be "first of all," *i.e.*, before I leave the sanctuary. Many must have been reminded of this scene when Eutropius, the eunuch-minister of Arcadius, under the protection of St. Chrysostom, cowered in front of the high altar at Constantinople.

[2] "There shall not a hair of him fall." Comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 45; 2 Sam. xiv. 11.

[3] "Bowed himself." Comp. 1 Kings i. 47.

"Go to thine house." If, as some have conjectured, Adonijah had once urged on his father the condign punishment of Absalom, he might well congratulate himself on receiving pardon.[1]

[1] Grätz, i. 138 (E. T.).

CHAPTER X.

DAVID'S DEATH-BED.

1 KINGS ii. 1—11.

"Omnibus idem exitus est, sed et idem domicilium."—PETRON., *Satyr.*

IN the Book of Samuel we have the last words of David in the form of a brief and vivid psalm, of which the leading principle is, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." A king's justice must be shown alike in his gracious influence upon the good and his stern justice to the wicked. The worthless sons of Belial are, he says, "to be beaten down like thorns with spear-shafts and iron."[1]

The same principle dominates in the charge which he gave to Solomon, perhaps after the magnificent public inauguration of his reign described in 1 Chron. xxviii., xxix. He bade his young son to show himself a man, and be rigidly faithful to the law of Moses, earning thereby the prosperity which would never fail to attend true righteousness.[2] Thus would the promise

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7. It is no part of my duty here to enter into the extent of David's share in the Psalms; but I think that it is an exaggerated inference (of Wellhausen and others) from Amos vi. 5, 6 to suppose that he only wrote festal and warlike songs.

[2] Apparently an allusion to Deut. xvii. 18-20. We read of no such exhortation having been addressed to Saul, or to David.

to David—"There shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel"—be continued in the time of Solomon.

With our Western and Christian views of morality we should have rejoiced if David's charge to his son had ended there. It is painful to us to read that his last injunctions bore upon the punishment of Joab who had so long fought for him, and of Shimei whom he had publicly pardoned. Between these two stern injunctions came the request that he would show kindness to the sons of Barzillai,[1] the old Gileadite sheykh who had extended such conspicuous hospitality to himself and his weary followers when they crossed the Jordan in their flight from Absalom. But the last words of David, as here recorded, are: "his (Shimei's) hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood."[2]

In these avenging behests there was nothing which was regarded as unnatural, nothing that would have shocked the conscience of the age. The fact that they are recorded without blame by an admiring historiographer shows that we are reading the annals of times of ignorance which God "winked at." They belong to the era of imperfect moral development, when it was said to them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," and men had not fully learnt the lesson, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,

[1] Chimham accompanied David to Jerusalem (2 Sam. xvii. 27, xix. 37-40), and perhaps inherited his property at Bethlehem, where he founded the Khan (Jer. xli. 17), in the cavern stable of which it may be that Christ was born.

[2] Wellhausen, Stade, and others venture on the conjecture that David never gave these injunctions at all, but that they were invented afterwards to excuse Solomon for his acts of severity towards Adonijah's conspirators. I cannot see any valid ground for such arbitrary re-writing of the history. Shimei had taken no part in Adonijah's rebellion.

saith the Lord." We must discriminate between the *vitia temporis* and the *vitia hominis*. David was trained in the old traditions of the "avenger of blood"; and we cannot be astonished, though we may greatly regret, that his standard was indefinitely below that of the Sermon on the Mount. He may have been concerned for the safety of his son, but to us it must remain a proof of his imperfect moral attainments that he bade Solomon look out for pretexts to "smite the hoary head of inveterate wickedness," and use his wisdom not to let the two offenders go down to the grave in peace.

The character of Joab furnishes us with a singular study. He, Abishai, and Asahel were the brave, impetuous sons of Zeruiah, the sister or half-sister of David. They were about his own age, and it is not impossible that they were the grandsons of Nahash, King of Ammon.[1] In the days of Saul they had embraced the cause of David, heart and soul. They had endured all the hardships and fought through all the struggles of his freebooting days. Asahel, the youngest, had been in the front rank of his *Gibborim*, and his foot was fleet as that of a gazelle upon the mountain. Abishai had been one of the three who, with jeopardy of their lives, had burst their way to Bethlehem when David longed to drink of the water of its well beside the gate. He had also, on one occasion, saved David's life from the giant Ishbi of Gath, and had slain three hundred Philistines with his spear. His zeal was always ready to flash into action in his uncle's cause. Joab had been David's commander-in-chief for forty years. It was Joab who had conquered the Ammonites

[1] Zeruiah was "a sister of the sons of Jesse" (1 Chron. ii. 16), and was therefore a sister of Abigail, mother of Amasa; but she is called "the daughter of *Nahash*" (2 Sam. xvii. 25).

and Moabites and stormed the City of Waters. It was Joab who, at David's bare request, had brought about the murder of Uriah. It was Joab who, after wise but fruitless remonstrance, had been forced to number the people. But David had never liked these rough imperious soldiers, whose ways were not his ways. From the first he was unable to cope with them, or keep them in order. In the early days they had treated him with rude familiarity, though in late years they, too, were obliged to approach him with all the forms of Eastern servility. But ever since the murder of Uriah, Joab knew that David's reputation and David's throne were in his hand. Joab himself had been guilty of two wild acts of vengeance for which he would have offered some defence, and of one atrocious crime. His murder of the princely Abner, the son of Ner, might have been excused as the duty of an avenger of blood, for Abner, with one back-thrust of his mighty spear, had killed the young Asahel, after the vain warning to desist from pursuing him. Abner had only killed Asahel in self-defence; but, jealous of Abner's power as the cousin of King Saul, the husband of Rizpah, and the commander of the northern army, Joab, after bluntly rebuking David for receiving him, had without hesitation deluded Abner back to Hebron by a false message and treacherously murdered him. Even at that early period of his reign David was either unable or unwilling to punish the outrage, though he ostentatiously deplored it.

Doubtless in slaying Absalom, in spite of the king's entreaty, Joab had inflicted an agonising wound on the pride and tenderness of his master. But Absalom was in open rebellion, and Joab may have held that David's probable pardon of the beautiful rebel would be both

weak and fatal. This death was inflicted in a manner needlessly cruel, but might have been excused as a death inflicted on the battle-field, though probably Joab had many an old grudge to pay off besides the burning of his barley field. After Absalom's rebellion David foolishly and unjustly offered the commandership of the army to his nephew Amasa. Amasa was the son of his sister Abigail by an Ishmaelite father, named Jether.[1] Joab simply would not tolerate being superseded in the command which he had earned by lifelong and perilous services. With deadly treachery, in which men have seen the antitype of the world's worst crime, Joab invited his kinsman to embrace him, and drove his sword into his bowels. David had heard, or perhaps had seen, the revolting spectacle which Joab presented, with the blood of war shed in peace, dyeing his girdle and streaming down to his shoes with its horrible crimson. Yet, even by that act, Joab had once more saved David's tottering throne. The Benjamite Sheba, son of Bichri, was making head in a terrible revolt, in which he had largely enlisted the sympathy of the northern tribes, offended by the overbearing fierceness of the men of Judah. Amasa had been either incompetent or half-hearted in suppressing this dangerous rising. It had only collapsed when the army welcomed back the strong hand of Joab. But whatever had been the crimes of Joab they had been condoned. David, on more than one occasion, had helplessly cried, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?" "I am

[1] 1 Chron. ii. 17. "Jether (*i.e.*, Jethro, 'pre-eminence') the Ishmaelite" has been altered in 2 Sam. xvii. 25 into Ithra, an *Israelite* (see 2 Sam. xix. 13). The way in which names have been tampered with is an interesting study, and often conceals Masoretic secrets.

this day weak though anointed king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me." But he had done nothing, and, whether with or against his will, they continued to hold their offices near his person. David did not remind Solomon of the murder of Absalom, nor of the words of menace—words as bold as any subject ever uttered to his sovereign—with which Joab had imperiously hushed his wail over his worthless son. Those words had openly warned the king that, if he did not alter his line of conduct, he should be king no more. They were an insult which no king could pardon, even if he were powerless to avenge. But Joab, like David himself, was now an old man. The events of the last few days had shown that his power and influence were gone. He may have had something to fear from Bathsheba as the wife of Uriah and the granddaughter of Ahithophel; but his adhesion to the cause of Adonijah had doubtless been chiefly due to jealousy of the ever-growing influence of the priestly soldier Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who had so evidently superseded him in his master's favour. However that may be, the historian faithfully records that David, on his death-bed, neither forgot nor forgave; and all that we can say is, that it would be unfair to judge him by modern or by Christian principles of conduct.

The other victim whose doom was bequeathed to the new king was Shimei, the son of Gera. He had cursed David at Bahurim on the day of his flight, and in the hour of his extremest humiliation. He had walked on the opposite side of the valley, flinging stones and dust at David,[1] cursing him with a grievous curse as a man

[1] David's enemies thought but little of the fact that David had

of Belial and a man of blood, and telling him that the loss of his kingdom was the retribution which had fallen upon him for the blood of the House of Saul which he had shed. So grievous was the trial of these insults that the place where the king and his people rested that night received the pathetic name of *Ayephim*, "the place of the weary."[1] For this conduct Shimei might have pleaded the pent-up animosities of the House of Saul, which had been stripped by David of all its honours, and of which poor lame Mephibosheth was the only scion left, after David had impaled Saul's seven sons and grandsons in human sacrifice at the demand of the Gibeonites. Abishai, indignant at Shimei's conduct, had said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" and had offered, then and there, to cross the valley and take his head. But David rebuked his generous wrath, and when Shimei came out to meet him on his return with expressions of penitence, David not only promised but swore that he should not die. No further danger surely could be anticipated from the ruined and humiliated House of Saul; yet David bade Solomon to find some excuse for putting Shimei to death.

How are we to deal with sins which are recorded of God's olden saints on the sacred page, and recorded without a word of blame?

Clearly we must avoid two errors—the one of injustice, the other of dishonesty.

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spared Mephibosheth. They may have supposed that David spared him, not only because he was the son of the beloved Jonathan, but because being lame he could never become king. David's relations to him do not seem to have been very cordial.

[1] 2 Sam. xvi. 14 (Heb.). For Bahurim, see 2 Sam. xvi. 5, xvii. 18.

1. On the one hand, as we have said, we must not judge Abraham, or Jacob, or Gideon, or Jael, or David, as though they were nineteenth-century Christians. Christ Himself taught us that some things inherently undesirable were yet permitted in old days because of the hardness of men's hearts; and that the moral standards of the days of ignorance were tolerated in all their imperfection until men were able to judge of their own deeds in a purer light. "The times of ignorance God overlooked," says St. Paul, "but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent."[1] "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But *I say unto you, Love your enemies,*" said our Lord.[2] When Bayle and Tindal and many others declaim against "the immorality of the Bible" they are unfair in a high degree. They pass judgment on men who had been trained from infancy in opinions and customs wholly unlike our own, and whose conscience would not be wounded by many things which we have been rightly taught to regard as evil. They apply the enlightenment of two millenniums of Christianity to criticise the more rudimentary conditions of life a millennium before Christ. The wild justice inflicted by an avenger of blood, the rude atrocity of the *lex talionis*, are rightly abhorrent to us in days of civilisation and settled law: they were the only available means of restraining crime in unsettled times and half-civilised communities. In his final injunctions about his enemies, whom he might have dreaded as enemies too formidable for his son to keep in subjection, David may have followed the view of his day that his former condonations had only been

[1] Acts xvii. 30. [2] Matt. v. 43, 44.

co-extensive with his own life, and that the claims of justice *ought* to be satisfied.[1]

2. But while we admit every palliation, and endeavour to judge justly, we must not fall into the conventionality of representing David's unforgiving severity as otherwise than reprehensible *in itself*. Attempts to gloss over moral wrong-doing, to represent it as blameless, to invent supposed Divine sanctions and intuitions in defence of it, can but weaken the eternal claims of the law of righteousness. The rule of right is inflexible: it is not a leaden rule which can be twisted into any shape we like. A crime is none the less a crime though a saint commits it; and imperfect conceptions of the high claims of the moral law, as Christ expounded its Divine significance, do not cease to be imperfect though they may be sometimes recorded without comment on the page of Scripture. No religious opinion can be more fatal to true religion than that wrong can, under any circumstances, become right, or that we may do evil that good may come. Because an act is relatively pardonable, it does not follow that it is not absolutely wrong. If it be dangerous to judge the essential morality of any earlier passage of Scripture by the ultimate laws which Scripture itself has taught us, it is infinitely more dangerous, and essentially Jesuitical, to explain away misdeeds as though, under any circumstances, they could be pleasing to God or worthy of a saint. The total omission of David's injunctions and of the sanguinary episodes of their fulfilment by the author of the Books of Chronicles, indicates that, in later days, they were thought dero-

[1] There is something analogous to protection *granted only for a lifetime* in the fact that the homicide at a refuge city could not be slain there while the high priest lived. See Num. xxxv. 28.

gatory to the pure fame both of the warrior-king and of his peaceful son.

David slept with his fathers, and passed before that bar where all is judged of truly. His life is an April day, half sunshine and half gloom. His sins were great, but his penitence was deep, lifelong, and sincere. He gave occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme, but he also taught all who love God to praise and pray. If his record contains some dark passages, and his character shows many inconsistencies, we can never forget his courage, his flashes of nobleness, his intense spirituality whenever he was true to his better self. His name is a beacon-light of warning against the glamour and strength of evil passions. But he showed us also what repentance can do, and we are sure that his sins were forgiven him because he turned away from his wickedness. "The sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." "I go the way of all the earth," said David. "In life," says Calmet, "each one has his particular route: one applies to one thing, another to another. But in the way to death they are all re-united. They go to the tomb by one path."[1]

David was buried in his own city—the stronghold of Zion; and his sepulchre—on the south part of Ophel, near the pool of Siloam—was still pointed out a thousand years later in the days of Christ.[2] As a poet who had given to the people splendid specimens of lyric songs;

[1] Comp. Josh. xxiii. 14; Keil. *ad loc.*

[2] Acts ii. 29. Josephus says that both Hyrcanus and Herod opened it to find the treasures which legend asserted to have been buried there (*Antt.*, VII. xv. 3. Comp. XIII. viii. 4, XVI. vii.). The kings alone were buried in Jerusalem; but legend says that an exception was made in favour of Huldah the prophetess.

as a warrior who had inspired their youth with dauntless courage; as a king who had made Israel a united nation with an impregnable capital, and had uplifted it from insignificance into importance; as the man in whose family the distinctive Messianic hopes of the Hebrews were centred, he must remain to the end of time the most remarkable and interesting figure in the long annals of the Old Dispensation.

CHAPTER XI.

AVENGING JUSTICE.

1 KINGS ii. 13—46.

"The wrath of a king is as messengers of death."—PROV. xvi. 14.

THE reign of Solomon began with a threefold deed of blood. An Eastern king, surrounded by the many princes of a polygamous family, and liable to endless jealousies and plots, is always in a condition of unstable equilibrium; the *death* of a rival is regarded as his only safe imprisonment.[1] On the other hand, it must be remembered that Solomon allowed his other brethren and kinsmen to live; and, in point of fact, his younger brother Nathan became the ancestor of the Divine Messiah of his race.[2]

It was the restless ambition of Adonijah which again brought down an avalanche of ruin. He and his adherents were necessarily under the cold shadow of royal disfavour, and they must have known that they had sinned too deeply to be forgiven. They felt the position intolerable. "In the light of the king's countenance

[1] These events—like almost everything derogatory to David and Solomon—are omitted by the chronicler.

[2] Luke iii. 31. Salathiel, son of Neri (Luke iii. 27), of Nathan's house, was probably adopted by Jeconiah, who was childless; or if he had a son Assir (captive), the son had died. 1 Chron. iii. 17; Isa. xxii. 3.

is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain"; but Adonijah, in the prime of strength and the heyday of passion, beautiful and strong, and once the favourite of his father, could not forget the banquet at which all the princes and nobles and soldiers had shouted, "Long live King Adonijah!" That the royalty of one delirious day should be succeeded by the dull and suspected obscurity of dreary years was more than he could endure, if, by any possible subtlety or force, he could avert a doom so unlike his former golden dreams. Was not Solomon at least ten or fifteen years younger than himself? Was not his seat on the throne of his kingdom still insecure? Were not his own followers powerful and numerous?

Perhaps one of those followers—the experienced Joab, or Jonathan, son of Abiathar—whispered to him that he need not yet acquiesce in the ruin of his hopes, and suggested a subtle method of strengthening his cause, and keeping his claim before the eyes of the people.

Every one knew that Abishag, the fair damsel of Shunem, the ideal of Hebrew maidenhood, was the loveliest virgin who could be found throughout all the land of Israel. Had she been in the strict sense David's wife or concubine, it would have been regarded as a deadly contravention of the Mosaic law that she should be wedded to one of her stepsons. But as she had only been David's nurse, what could be more suitable than that so bright a maiden should be united to the handsome prince?

It was understood in all Eastern monarchies that the harem of a predecessor belonged to the succeeding sovereign. The first thing that a rival or a usurper aimed at was to win the prestige of possessing the wives of the royal house. Nathan reminds David that

the Lord had given his master's wives into his bosom.[1] Ishbosheth, weak as he was, had been stung into indignation against his general and great-uncle the mighty Abner, because Abner had taken Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, Saul's concubine, to wife, which looked like a dangerously ambitious encroachment upon the royal prerogative. Absalom, by the vile counsel of Ahithophel, had openly taken possession of the ten concubines whom his father, in his flight from Jerusalem, had left in charge of the palace. The pseudo-Smerdis, when he revolted against the absent Cambyses, at once seized his seraglio.[2] It is noted even in our English history that the relations between the Earl of Mortimer and Queen Isabella involved danger to the kingdom; and when Admiral Seymour married Queen Catharine Parr, widow of Henry VIII., he at once entered into treasonable conspiracies. Adonijah knew well that he would powerfully further his ulterior purpose if he could secure the hand of the lovely Shunamite.

Yet he feared to make the request to Solomon, who had already inspired him with wholesome awe. With pretended simplicity he sought the intercession of the *Gebira* Bathsheba, who, being the queen-mother, exercised great influence as the first lady of the land.[3] She it was who had placed the jewelled bridal crown with her own hand on the head of her young son.[4]

Alarmed at his visit she asked, "Comest thou peaceably?" He came, he humbly assured her, to ask a

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 8. Comp. 1 Kings xx. 7; 2 Kings xxiv. 15. We only know, however, of one wife of Saul, and one concubine.

[2] Herod., iii. 68; Justin., x. 2.

[3] Comp. 1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xi. 1. The queen-mother, like the Sultana Walidé, is always more powerful than even the favourite wife.

[4] Cant. iii. 11.

favour. Might she not think of his case with a little pity? He was the elder son; the kingdom by right of primogeniture was his; all Israel, so he flattered himself, had wished for his accession. But it had all been in vain, Jehovah had given the kingdom to his brother. Might he not be allowed some small consolation, some little accession to his dignity? at least some little source of happiness in his home?

Flattered by his humility and his appeal, Bathsheba encouraged him to proceed, and he begged that, as Solomon would refuse no request to his mother, would she ask that Abishag might be his wife?

With extraordinary lack of insight, Bathsheba, ambitious as she was, failed to see the subtle significance of the request, and promised to present his petition.

She went to Solomon, who immediately rose to meet her, and seated her with all honour on a throne at his right hand.[1] She had only come, she said, to ask "a small petition."

"Ask on, my mother," said the king tenderly, "for I will not say thee nay."

But no sooner had she mentioned the "small petition" than Solomon burst into a flame of fury. "Why did she not ask for the kingdom for Adonijah at once?

[1] Psalm xlv. 9. Some little mystery evidently hangs over the name of Bathsheba. In 2 Sam. xi. 3 she is called "Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite"; but in 1 Chron. iii. 5 she is called "*Bathshua*, the daughter of *Ammiel*." Now Shua was a Canaanite name (Gen. xxxviii. 12; 1 Chron. ii. 3), and it is at least remarkable that Bathsheba should be married to a Hittite. Further, the chronicler disguises "Ahithophel the Gilonite (the father of Eliam) into Ahijah the Pelonite," who is one of David's Gibborim in 1 Chron. xi. 36. Pelonite means *nescio quis*; in Spanish, Don Fulano, —Signor So-and-so. And how are we to account for the strange name Ahithophel ("brother of foolishness?")?

He was the elder. He had the chief priest and the chief captain with him. They must be privy to this new plot. But by the God who had given him his father's kingdom, and established him a house, Adonijah had made the request to his own cost, and should die that day."

The command was instantly given to Benaiah, who, as captain of the body-guard, was also chief executioner. He slew Adonijah that same hour, and so the third of David's splendid sons died in his youth a death of violence.

We pause to ask whether the sudden and vehement outburst of King Solomon's indignation was only due to political causes? If, as seems almost certain, Abishag is indeed the fair Shulamite of the Song of Songs, there can be little doubt that Solomon himself loved her,[1] and that she was "the jewel of his seraglio."[2] The true meaning of Canticles is not difficult to read, however much it may lend itself to mystical and allegorical applications. It represents a rustic maiden, faithful to her shepherd lover, resisting all the allurements of a king's court, and all the blandishments of a king's affection. It is the one book of Scripture which is exclusively devoted to sing the glory of a pure love. The king is magnanimous; he does not force the beautiful maiden to accept his addresses. Exercising her freedom, and true to the dictates of her heart, she rejoicingly leaves the perfumed atmosphere of the harem of Jerusalem for the sweet and vernal air of her

[1] Comp. Cant. vii. 1. It has been assumed that Solomon had already married Naamah the Ammonitess, and that Rehoboam was already born (see 1 Kings xiv. 21), but this is uncertain. Rehoboam, if he had reached the age of forty-one, could hardly have been called "young and tender-hearted" (2 Chron. xiii. 7).

[2] Shunem (Sulem, Euseb., *Jer.*) is now *Solam* (Robinson, *Researches*, iii. 402).

country home under the shadow of its northern hills. Solomon's impetuous wrath would not be so unaccountable if an unrequited affection added the sting of jealousy to the wrath of offended power. The scene is the more interesting because it is one of the very few personal touches in the story of Solomon, which is chiefly composed of external details, both in Scripture and in such fragments as have been preserved of the pagan historian Dios, Eupolemos, Nicolas Polyhistor, and those referred to by Josephus, Eusebius, and Clemens of Alexandria.

The fall of Adonijah involved his chief votaries in ruin. Abiathar had been a friend and follower of David from his youthful days. When Doeg, the treacherous Edomite, had informed Saul that the priests of Nob had shown kindness to David in his hunger and distress, the demoniac king had not shrunk from employing the Edomite herdsman to massacre all on whom he could lay his hands. From this slaughter of eighty-five priests who wore linen ephods, Abiathar had fled to David, who alone could protect him from the king's pursuit.[1] In the days when the outlaw lived in dens and caves, the priest had been constantly with him, and had been afflicted in all wherein he was afflicted, and had inquired of God for him. David had recognised how vast was his debt of gratitude to one whose father and all his family had been sacrificed for an act of kindness done to himself. Abiathar had been chief priest for all the forty years of David's reign. In Absalom's rebellion he had still been faithful to the king. His son Jonathan had been David's scout in the city. Abiathar had helped Zadok to carry the Ark to the last house by the ascent to the

[1] 1 Sam. xxii. 23.

Mount of Olives, and there he had stood under the olive tree by the wilderness[1] till all the people had passed by. If his loyalty had been less ardent than that of his brother-priest Zadok, who had evidently taken the lead in the matter, he had given no ground for suspicion. But, perhaps secretly jealous of the growing influence of his younger rival, the old man, after some fifty years of unswerving allegiance, had joined his lifelong friend Joab in supporting the conspiracy of Adonijah, and had not even now heartily accepted the rule of Solomon. Assuming his complicity in Adonijah's request, Solomon sent for him, and sternly told him that he was "a man of death," *i.e.*, that death was his desert. But it would have been outrageous to slay an aged priest, the sole survivor of a family slaughtered for David's sake, and one who had so long stood at the head of the whole religious organisation, wearing the Urim and carrying the Ark. He was therefore summarily deposed from his functions, and dismissed to his paternal fields at Anathoth, a priestly town about six miles from Jerusalem.[2] We hear no more of him; but Solomon's warning, "I will not *at this time* put thee to death," was sufficient to show him that, if he mixed himself with court intrigues again, he would ultimately pay the forfeit with his life. Solomon, like Saul, paid very little regard to "benefit of the clergy."[3]

The doom fell next on the arch-offender Joab, the white-haired hero of a hundred fights, "the Douglas of

[1] 2 Sam. xv. 18 (LXX.).

[2] *Anata*, Robinson, *Researches*, ii. 319; Josh. xxi. 18; 1 Chron. vi. 60. It was the native town of Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1).

[3] It should be remembered that, as Ewald points out, imprisonment for life was a thing unknown.

the House of David." He had, if the reading of the ancient versions be correct, "turned after Adonijah, and *had not turned after Solomon.*" Solomon could hardly have felt at ease when a general so powerful and so popular was disaffected to his rule, and Joab read his own sentence in the execution of Adonijah. On hearing the news the old hero fled up Mount Zion, and clung to the horns of the altar. But Abiathar, who might have asserted the sacredness of the asylum, was in disgrace, and Joab was not to escape. "What has happened to thee that thou hast fled to the altar?" was the message sent to him by the king. "Because," he answered, "I was afraid of thee, and fled unto the Lord."[1] It was Solomon's habit to give his autocratic orders with laconic brevity. "Go, fall upon him," he said to Benaiah.

The scene which ensued was very tragic.

The two rivals were face to face. On the one side the aged general, who had placed on David's head the crown of Rabbah, who had saved him from the rebellions of Absalom and of Sheba, and had been the pillar of his military glory and dominion for so many years; on the other the brave soldier-priest, who had won a chief place among the *Gibborim* by slaying a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and "two lion-like men of Moab,"[2] and a gigantic Egyptian whom he had attacked with only a staff, and out of whose hand he had plucked a spear like a weaver's beam and killed him with his own spear. As David lost confidence in Joab he had reposed more and more confidence in this hero. He had placed him

[1] This interesting addition is found in the Septuagint version.

[2] 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. Ewald, Thenius, and most other critics, followed by the R.V., adopt the LXX. reading, "Slew the two sons of Ariel of Moab."

over the body-guards, whom he trusted more than the native militia.

The Levite-soldier had no hesitation about acting as executioner, but he did not like to slay any man, and above all such a man, in a place so sacred,[1]—in a place where his blood would be mingled with that of the sacrifices with which the horns of the altar were besmeared.

"The king bids thee come forth," he said.

"Nay," said Joab, "but I will die here."

Perhaps he thought that he might be protected by the asylum, as Adonijah had been; perhaps he hoped that in any case his blood might cry to God for vengeance, if he was slain in the sanctuary of Mount Zion, and on the very altar of burnt offering.

Benaiah naturally scrupled under such circumstances to carry out Solomon's order, and went back to him for instruction. Solomon had no such scruples, and perhaps held that this act was meritorious.[2] "Slay him," he said, "where he stands! He is a twofold murderer; let his blood be on his head." Then Benaiah went back and killed him, and was promoted to his vacant office. Such was the dismal end of so much valour and so much glory! He had taken the sword, and he perished by the sword. And the Jews believed that the curse of David clung to his house for ever, and that among his descendants there never lacked one that was a leper, or a lame man, or a suicide, or a pauper.[3]

Shimei's turn came next. A watchful eye was fixed implacably on this last indignant representative of the ruined House of Saul. Solomon had sent and ordered him to leave his estate at Bahurim, and build a house

[1] Comp. 2 Kings xi. 15. [2] See Deut. xix. 13. [3] 2 Sam. iii. 28, 29.

at Jerusalem, forbidding him to go "any whither,"[1] and telling him that if on any pretence he passed the wady of Kidron he should be put to death. As he could not visit Bahurim, or any of his Benjamite connexions, without passing the Kidron, all danger of further intrigues seemed to be obviated.[2] To these terms the dangerous man had sworn, and for three years he kept them faithfully. At the end of that time two of his slaves fled from him to Achish, son of Maachah, King of Gath.[3] When informed of their whereabouts, Shimei, apparently with no thought of evil, saddled his mule and went to demand their restoration. As he had not crossed the Kidron, and had merely gone to Gath on private business, he thought that Solomon would never hear of it, or would at any rate treat the matter as harmless. Solomon, however, regarded his conduct as a proof of retributive dementation. He sent for him, bitterly upbraided him, and ordered Benaiah to slay him. So perished the last of Solomon's enemies; but Shimei had two illustrious descendants in the persons of Mordecai and Queen Esther.[4]

Solomon perhaps conceived himself to be only acting up to the true kingly ideal. "A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them." "An evil man seeketh

[1] אָנָה וָאָנָה (1 Kings ii. 36).

[2] It should be remembered that when Shimei came to meet David on his return, he managed to muster one thousand of his Benjamite kinsmen. Such local influence might prove troublesome.

[3] Achish seems to have been the dynastic name of the kings of Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 10, xxvii. 2). If this was the Achish, son of Maoch, with whom David had taken refuge fifty years before, he must now have been a very old man.

[4] Esth. ii. 5.

only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him." "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion, whoso provoketh him to anger endangereth his own soul."[1] On the other hand, he continued hereditary kindness to Chimham, son of the old chief Barzillai the Gileadite, who became the founder of the Khan at Bethlehem in which a thousand years later Christ was born.[2]

The elevation of Zadok to the high priesthood vacated by the disgrace of Abiathar restored the priestly succession to the elder line of the House of Aaron. Aaron had been the father of four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The two eldest had perished childless in the wilderness, apparently for the profanation of serving the tabernacle while in a state of intoxication and offering "strange fire" upon the altar.[3] The son of Eleazar was the fierce priestly avenger Phinehas. The order of succession was as follows:—

AARON.

Eleazar.	Ithamar.
Phinehas.	(gap.)
Abishua.	Eli.
Bukki.	Phinehas.
Uzzi.	Ahitub.
Zerahiah.	Ahiah (1 Sam. xiv. 3).
Meraioth.	Ahimelech.
Amariah.	Abiathar (1 Sam. xxii. 20).
Ahitub.	
Zadok.[4]	

[1] Prov. xix. 11, xx. 2, 8, 26.

[2] 1 Kings ii. 7; Jer. xli. 17.

[3] Lev. x. 1-20; Num. iii. 4, xxvi. 61. This has been not unnaturally inferred from the prohibition to the priests to drink wine while serving the tabernacle lest they die, which occurs immediately after the catastrophe of the two priests (Lev. x. 9-11).

[4] 1 Chron. vii. 4-15.

The question naturally arises how the line of succession came to be disturbed, since to Eleazar, and his seed after him, had been promised "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood."[1] As the elder line continued unbroken, how was it that, for five generations at least, from Eli to Abiathar, we find the *younger* line of Ithamar in secure and lineal possession of the high priesthood? The answer belongs to the many strange reserves of Jewish history. It is clear from the silence of the Book of Chronicles that the intrusion, however caused, was an unpleasant recollection. Jewish tradition has perhaps revealed the secret, and a very curious one it is. We are told that Phinehas was high priest when Jephthah made his rash vow, and that his was the hand which carried out the human sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. But the inborn feelings of humanity in the hearts of the people were stronger than the terrors of superstition, and arising in indignation against the high priest who could thus imbrue his hands in an innocent maiden's blood, they drove him from his office and appointed a son of Ithamar in his place. The story then offers a curious analogy to that told of the Homeric hero Idomeneus, King of Crete. Caught in a terrible storm on his return from Troy, he too vowed that if his life were saved he would offer up in sacrifice the first living thing that met him. His eldest son came forth with gladness to meet him.

In David's time there were only eight descendants of Ithamar, but sixteen of Eleazar (1 Chron. xxiv. 4). For full discussion of these priestly genealogies, see Lord A. Hervey, *On the Genealogies*, pp. 277-306. It is true that they are not free from elements of difficulty, but I am unable to find any valid ground for the suspicion of some critics that Zadok was not even a priest, or of the priestly house at all. All the evidence we have points in the opposite direction.

[1] Num. xxv. 13.

Idomeneus fulfilled his vow, but the Cretans rose in revolt against the ruthless father, and a civil war ensued, in which a hundred cities were destroyed and the king was driven into exile. The Jewish tradition is one which could hardly have been invented. It is certain that Jephthah's daughter *was* offered up in sacrifice, in accordance with his rash vow. This could hardly have been done by any but a priest, and the ferocious zeal of Phinehas would not perhaps have shrunk from the horrible consummation. Revolting, even abhorrent, as is such a notion from our views of God, and decisively as human sacrifice is condemned by all the highest teaching of Scripture, the traces of this horrible tendency of human guilt and human fear are evident in the history of Israel as of all other early nations. Some thought akin to it must have lain under the temptation of Abraham to offer up his son Isaac. Twelve centuries later Manasseh "made his son pass through the fire," and kindled the furnaces of Moloch at Tophet in Gehenna, the valley of the sons of Hinnom.[1] His grandfather Ahaz had done the same before him, offering sacrifice and burning his children in the fire.[2] Surrounded by kindred tribes, to which this worship was familiar, the Israelites, in their ignorance and backsliding, were not exempt from its fatal fascination. Solomon himself "went after," and built a high place for Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites, on the right hand of "the hill that is before Jerusalem," which from this desecration got the name of "The Mount of Corruption." These high places continued, and it must be supposed, had their votaries on "that opprobrious hill," until good Josiah dismantled

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6; 2 Kings xxi. 6. "His children."
[2] 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; 2 Kings xvi. 3. "His son."

and defiled them about the year 639, some three centuries after they had been built.

But whether this legend about Phinehas be tenable or not, it is certain that the House of Ithamar fell into deadly disrepute and abject misery. In this the people saw the fulfilment of an old traditional curse, pronounced by some unknown "man of God" on the House of Eli, that there should be no old man in his house for ever; that his descendants should die in the flower of their age; and that they should come cringing to the descendants of the priest whom God would raise up in his stead, to get some humble place about the priesthood for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread.[1]

The prolongation of the curse in the House of Joab and of Eli furnishes an illustration of the menacing appendix to the second commandment—"For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love Me and keep My commandments."

There is in families, as in communities, a solidarity alike of blessing and curse. No man perishes alone in his iniquity, whether he be an offender like Achan or an offender like Joab. Families have their inheritance of character, their prerogative examples of misdoing, their influence of the guilty past flowing like a tide of calamity over the present and the future! The physical consequences of transgression remain long after the sins which caused them have ended. Three things, however, are observable in this, as in

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 27-36. For eight centuries there was no other instance of a high priest's deposition.

every faithfully recorded history. One is that mercy boasteth over justice, and the area of beneficent consequence is more permanent and more continuous than that of the entailed curse, as right is always more permanent than wrong. A second is that, though man at all times is liable to troubles and disabilities, no innocent person who suffers temporal afflictions from the sins of his forefathers shall suffer one element of unjust depression in the eternal interests of life. A third is that the ultimate prosperity of the children, alike of the righteous and of sinners, is in their own control; each soul shall perish, and shall only perish, for its own sin. In this sense, though the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the teeth of the children shall *not* be set on edge. In the long generations the line of David no less than the line of Joab, the line of Zadok no less than that of Abiathar, was destined to feel the Nemesis of evil-doing, and to experience that, of whatever parentage men are born, the law remains true—"Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."[1]

[1] Isa. iii. 10.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOY-KING'S WISDOM.

1 KINGS iii. 1—28.

"An oracle is upon the lips of a king."—PROV. xvi. 10 (Heb.).

"A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eye."—PROV. xx. 8.

"Ch' ei fu Rè, che chiese senno
Acciochè Rè sufficiente fosse."

DANTE, *Parad.*, xiii. 95.

"Deos ipsos precor ut mihi ad finem usque vitæ quietam et intelligentem humani divinique juris mentem duint."—TAC., *Ann.*, iv. 38.

IT would have thrown an interesting light on the character and development of Solomon, if we had been able to conjecture with any certainty what was his age when the death of David made him the unquestioned king. The pagan historian Eupolemos, quoted by Eusebius, says that he was twelve; Josephus asserts that he was fifteen. If Rehoboam was indeed as old as forty-one when he came to the throne (1 Kings xiv. 21), Solomon can hardly have been less than twenty at his accession, for in that case he must have been married before David's death (1 Kings xi. 42). But the reading "forty-one" in 1 Kings xiv. 21 is altered by some into "twenty-one," and we are left in complete uncertainty. Solomon is called "a child" (1 Kings iii. 7), "young and tender" (1 Chron. xxix. 1);

but his acts show the full vigour and decision of a man.[1]

The composite character of the Books of Kings leads to some disturbance of the order of events, and 1 Kings iii. 1-4 is perhaps inserted to explain Solomon's sacrifice at the high place of Gibeon,[2] where stood the brazen altar of the old Tabernacle.[3] But no apology is needed for that act.[4] The use of high places, even when they were consecrated to the worship of Jehovah, was regarded in later days as involving principles of danger, and became a grave offence in the eyes of all who took the Deuteronomic standpoint. But high places to Jehovah, as distinct from those dedicated to idols, were not condemned by the earlier prophets, and the resort to them was never regarded as blameworthy before the establishment of the central sanctuary.

After the frightful massacre of the descendants of Aaron at Nob, the old "Tabernacle of the congregation" and the great brazen altar of burnt offerings had been removed to Gibeon from a city defiled by the

[1] See 1 Sam. xxi. 6, compared with 1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40; 2 Chron. i. 3.

[2] An old Hivite capital (Josh. xviii. 21-25), now El Jib. Josephus alters it to "Hebron."

[3] See 1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40, xxi. 29; 2 Chron. i. 3. The annals of Solomon fall into three divisions: first, his secure establishment upon the throne (1 Kings i., ii.); next, his wisdom, wealth, glory, and great buildings, especially the building of the Temple (iii.-x.); lastly, his fall and death (xi.).

[4] It was sufficiently sanctioned by Exod. xx. 24, and Jerusalem was not yet chosen (Deut. xii. 13, 14). See Judg. vi. 24, xiii. 19; 1 Sam. ix. 12, etc. This seems to have been the last great sacrifice there. In 1 Kings iii. 5-15 the sacrifice is regarded with approval; in verses 2, 3 it is condemned, but excused by circumstances; in the verses inserted by the chronicler (2 Chron. i. 3-6) it is said that the Tabernacle was there.

blood of priests.[1] Gibeon stood on a commanding elevation within easy distance of Jerusalem, and was henceforth regarded as "the great high place," until the Temple on Mount Zion was finished. Thither Solomon went in that imposing civil, religious, and military procession of which the tradition may be preserved in the name of Wady Suleimân still given to the adjoining valley. There, with Oriental magnificence, like Xerxes at Troy, he offered what the Greeks called a *chiliombe*, that is, a tenfold hecatomb of burnt offerings.[2] This "thousandfold holocaust," as the Septuagint terms it, must have been a stately and long-continued function, and in approval of his sacrifice Jehovah granted a vision to the youthful king. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, when all the beasts of the forest are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? "Thinkest thou," He asked, in the words of the Psalmist, "that I will eat bull's flesh or drink the blood of goats?" No; but God always accepts a willing sacrifice in accordance with the purpose and sincerity of the giver. In reward for the pure intention of the king He appeared to Solomon in a dream, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

The Jews recognised three modes of Divine communication—by dreams, by Urim, and by prophets. The highest and most immediate illumination was the prophetic. The revelation by means of the primitive Urim and Thummin, the oracle and jewelled breastplate of the high priest, was the poorest, the most

[1] See 1 Sam. xxii. 17-19.

[2] Herod., vii. 43. Xerxes offered one thousand at Troy, and Crœsus three thousand at Delphi (*Id.*, i. 50).

elementary, the most liable to abuse. It was analogous to the method used by the Egyptian chief priests, who wore round their necks a sapphire ornament called Thmei, or "truth," for purposes of divination.[1] After the death of David the Urim and Thummin fell into such absolute desuetude, as a survival of primitive times, that we do not read of its being consulted again in a single instance. It is not so much as mentioned during the five centuries of the history of the kings, and we do not hear of it afterwards. Solomon never once inquired of the priests as David did repeatedly. In the reign of Solomon the voice of prophecy, too, was silent, until disasters began to cloud its close. Times of material prosperity and autocratic splendour are unfavourable to the prophet's function, and sometimes, as in the days of Ahab, the prophets themselves "philippised" in Jehovah's name. But revelation by dreams occurs in all ages. In his prophecy of the great future, Joel says, "Your old men shall see visions, your young men shall dream dreams." It is true that dreams must always have a subjective element, yet, as Aristotle says, "The visions of the noble are better than those of common men."[2] (The dreams of night are reflections of the thoughts of day.) "Solomon worships God by day; God appears to Solomon by night. Well may we look to enjoy God, when we have served Him."[3] Full of the thoughts inspired by an intense devotion, and a yearning desire to rule aright, the sleeping soul of Solomon became

[1] Hence, perhaps, the LXX. rendering of Δήλωσις καὶ Ἀλήθεια. This view is accepted by Hengstenberg (*Egypt and the Five Books of Moses*, chap. vi.), and Kalisch (on Exod. xxviii. 31).

[2] Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, i. 13: "βελτίω τὰ φαντάσματα τῶν ἐπιεικῶν ἢ τῶν τυχόντων."

[3] Bishop Hall.

bright with eyes,[1] and in his dream he made a worthy answer to the appeal of God.

"Ask what I shall give thee!" That blessed and most loving offer is made to every human soul. To the meanest of us all God flings open the treasuries of heaven. The reason why we fatally lose them is because we are blinded by the glamour of temptation, and snatch instead at glittering bubbles or Dead Sea fruits. We fail to attain the best gifts, because so few of us earnestly desire them, and so many disbelieve the offer that is made of them. Yet there is no living soul to which God has not given the choice of good and evil. "He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man is life and death; and whether him liketh shall be given him."[2] Even when our choice is not evil it is often desperately frivolous, and it is only too late that we rue the folly of having rejected the better and chosen the worse.

"Damsels of Time the hypocritic days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,—
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleachèd garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes; hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn."[3]

But Solomon made the wise choice. In his dream he thanked God for His mercifully fulfilled promise

[1] "Εὕδουσα γὰρ φρὴν ὄμμασιν λαμπρύνεται."—Æsch., *Eum.*, 104.

[2] Ecclus. xv. 16, 17.

[3] Emerson.

to David his father, and with the touchingly humble confession, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in,"[1] he begged for an understanding heart to judge between right and wrong in guiding his great and countless people.[2]

God was pleased with the noble, unselfish request. The youthful king might have besought the boon of "many days," which was so highly valued before Christ had brought life and immortality to light; or for riches, or for victory over his enemies. Instead of this he had asked for "understanding, to discern judgment," and the lesser gifts were freely accorded him. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."[3] God promised him that he should be a king of unprecedented greatness. He freely gave him riches and honour, and, conditionally on his continued faithfulness, a long life. The condition was broken, and Solomon was not more than sixty years old when he was called before the God whom he forsook.[4]

"And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream." But he knew well that it was also more than a dream, and that "God giveth to His beloved even sleeping."[5]

In reverential gratitude he offered a second sacrifice

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[1] The phrase "a little child" (comp. Jer. i. 6) hardly bears on his actual age. See Gen. xliii. 8; Exod. xxxiii. 11. It is proverbial like the subsequent phrase, for which see Deut. xxviii. 6; Psalm cxxi. 8, etc.

[2] Heb., "A hearing heart." LXX., "A heart to hear and judge Thy people in righteousness." In 2 Chron. i. 10, "Wisdom and knowledge."

[3] Matt. vi. 33.

[4] Josephus (*Antt.*, VIII. vii. 8) makes him die at ninety-four, and become king at fourteen. Perhaps he mistook μ' for π' in the LXX.

[5] Psalm cxxvii. 2 (uncertain).

of burnt offerings before the ark on Mount Zion, and added to them peace offerings, with which he made a great feast to all his servants. Twice again did God appear to Solomon; but the second time it was to warn, and the third time to condemn.

In the parallel account given by the chronicler, Solomon says, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge," and God replies, "Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee." There is a wide difference between the two things. Knowledge may come while wisdom still lingers, and wisdom may exist in Divine abundance where knowledge is but scant and superficial. The wise may be as ignorant as St. Antony, or St. Francis of Assisi; the masters of those who know may show as little 'wisdom for a man's self' as Abélard, or as Francis Bacon. "Among the Jews one set of terms does service to express both intellectual and moral wisdom. The 'wise' man means the righteous man; the 'fool' is one who is godless. Intellectual terms that describe knowledge are also moral terms describing life." No doubt in the ultimate senses of the words there can be no true knowledge, as there can be no perfect wisdom, without goodness. This was a truth with which Solomon himself became deeply impressed. "The fear of the Lord," he said, "is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise knowledge and understanding." The lineaments of "a fool" are drawn in the Book of Proverbs, and they bear the impress of moral baseness and moral aberrations.

To Solomon both boons were given, "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." Of his many forms of intellectual eminence I will speak later on. What he longed for most was evidently moral

insight and practical sagacity. He felt that "through justice shall the throne be established."

Practical wisdom was eminently needed for the office of a judge.[1] Judgeship was a main function of Eastern royalty, and rulers were called *Shophetim* or judges.[2] The reality of the gift which Solomon had received from God was speedily to be tested.[3] Two harlots came before him.[4] One had overlaid her child in the night, and stealing the living child of the other she put her dead child in its place. There was no evidence to be had. It was simply the bare word of one disreputable woman against the bare word of the other. With instant decision, and a flash of insight into the springs of human actions, Solomon gave the apparently childish order to cut the children in two, and divide them between the claimants. The people laughed,[5] and the delinquent accepted the horrible decision; but the mother of the living child yearned for her babe, and she cried out, "O my lord, give her the living babe,[6] and in no wise slay it." "*Give her the living babe, and in no wise slay it,*" murmured the king to himself, repeating the mother's words; and then he burst out with the triumphant verdict, "Give *her* the living child! *she* is the mother thereof!"[7]

[1] 1 Sam. viii. 6, 20; 2 Sam. xv. 4. "To rule was with the ancients the synonym of to judge." Artemidorus, *Oneirocr.*, ii. 14. (Bähr, *ad loc.*).

[2] Compare the Phœnician's *Suffetes* (Liv.).

[3] As instances of the lower sense in which the term "wisdom" was applied, see 2 Sam. xiii. 3 (Jonadab); xiv. 2 (the woman of Tekoa); xx. 16 (the woman of Abel of Beth-maachah).

[4] The Rabbis call them "innkeepers," as they call Rahab.

[5] I follow the not improbable additional details given by Josephus from tradition.

[6] יֶלֶד. LXX., παιδίον.

[7] So the Greek version, which represents the clause rightly. Tra-

The story has several parallels. It is said by Diodorus Siculus that when three youths came before Ariopharnes, King of Thrace, each claiming to be the only son of the King of the Cimmerians, he ordered them each to hurl a javelin at their father's corpse. Two obeyed, one refused, and Ariopharnes at once proclaimed him to be the true son.[1] Similarly an Indian story tells that a woman, before she bathed, left her child on the bank of the pool, and a female demon carried it off. The goddess, before whom each claimed the child, ordered them to pull it in two between them, and consigned it to the mother who shuddered at the test.[2] A judgment similarly founded on filial instinct is attributed to the Emperor Claudius. A mother refused to acknowledge her son; and as there were no proofs Claudius ordered her to marry the youth, whereupon she was obliged to acknowledge that he was her son.[3]

Modern critics, wise after the event, express themselves very slightingly of the amount of intelligence required for the decision; but the people saw the value of the presence of mind and rapid intuition which settled the question by bringing an individual dilemma under the immediate arbitrament of a general law. They rejoiced to recognise the practical wisdom which God

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dition narrates a yet earlier specimen of Solomon's wisdom. Some sheep had strayed into a pasture. The owner of the land demanded reparation. David said that to repay his loss he might keep the sheep. "No," said Solomon, who was but eleven years old, "let him keep them only till their wool, milk, and lambs have repaid the damage; then let him restore them to their owner." David admitted that this was the more equitable judgment, and he adopted it. See The Qur'an, *Sura* xxi. 79 (Palmer's Qur'an, ii. 52).

[1] The parallel is adduced by Grotius.

[2] Quoted by Bähr.

[3] Suet., *Claud.*, 15.

had given to their young king. The word *Chokhmah*, which is represented by one large section of Jewish literature, implied the practical intelligence derived from insight or experience, the power to govern oneself and others. Its conclusions were expressed chiefly in a gnomic form, and they pass through various stages in the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament. The chief books of the *Chokhmah* are the Books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, followed by such books as Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. On the Divine side Wisdom is the Spirit of God, regarded by man under the form of Providence (Wisdom i. 4, 7, vii. 7, 22, ix. 17); and on the human side it is trustworthy knowledge of the things that are (*id.* vii. 17). It is, in fact, "a knowledge of Divine and human things, and of their causes" (4 Macc. ii. 16). This branch of wisdom could be repeatedly shown by Solomon at the city gate and in the hall of judgment.

2. His varied *intellectual* wisdom created deeper astonishment. He spake, we are told, "of trees from the cedar which is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts and fowl and of creeping things and of fishes." This knowledge has been misunderstood and exaggerated by later tradition. It is expanded in the Book of Wisdom (viii. 17) into a perfect knowledge of kosmogony, astronomy, the alterations of solstices, the cycles of years, the natures of wild beasts, the forces of spirits, the reasonings of men, the diversities of plants. Solomon became to Eastern legend

> "The warrior-sage, whose restless mind
> Through nature's mazes wandered unconfined,
> Who every bird, and beast, and insect knew,
> And spake of every plant that quaffs the dew."

His knowledge, however, does not seem to have been even empirically scientific. It consisted in the moral and religious illustration of truth by emblems derived from nature.[1] He surpassed, we are told, the ethnic gnomic wisdom of all the children of the East—the Arabians and Chaldæans, and all the vaunted scientific and mystic wisdom of Egypt.[2] Ethan and Heman were Levitic poets and musicians;[3] Chalcol and Darda[4] were "sons of the choir," *i.e.*, poets (Luther), or sacred singers;[5] and all four were famed for wisdom; but Solomon excelled them all. Of his one thousand and five songs, the majority were probably secular. Only two psalms are even traditionally assigned to him.[6] Of his three thousand proverbs not more than two hundred survive, even if all in the Book of Proverbs be his. Tradition adds that he was a master of "riddles" or "dark sayings," by which he won largely in fines from Hiram, whom he challenged for their solution, until the Tyrian king defeated him by the aid of a sharp youth named Abdemon.[7] Specimens of these riddles with their answers may be found in the Book of Proverbs,[8] for the Hebrew word "proverb"

[1] For references to animals, etc., see Prov. vi. 6, xxiv. 30-34, xxx 15-19, 24-31; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. ii. 5; Ecclus. xlvii. 17.

[2] See Isa. xix. 11, xxxi. 2; Acts vii. 22; Herod., ii. 160; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. ii. 5 (Keil).

[3] See 1 Chron. ii. 6, vi. 44, xv. 17, 19, xxv. 5. Titles of Psalms xviii., lxxxviii., lxxxix. "Ezrahite," perhaps, is a transposition of Zerahite.

[4] 1 Chron. ii. 6. In *Seder Olam* they are called "prophets who prophesied in Egypt."

[5] "Sons of Mahol" (comp. Eccles. xii. 4).

[6] Psalms lxxii., cxxvii. The so-called "Psalms of Solomon," fifteen in number, are of the Maccabean age; Josephus calls his songs *βίβλια περὶ ὠδῶν καὶ μελῶν*, and his proverbs *βίβλους παραβολῶν καὶ εἰκόνων*.

[7] See Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, ix. 34, § 19.

[8] Prov. xi. 22, xxiv. 30-34, xxv. 25, xxvi. 8, xxx. 15.

(*Mashal*) probably means originally, an illustration. This book also contains various ambiguous hard sayings of which the skilful construction awoke admiration and stimulated thought.[1] The Queen of Sheba is said to have tested Solomon by riddles.[2] The tradition gradually spread in the East that Solomon was also skilled in magic arts, that he knew the language of the birds,[3] and possessed a seal which gave him mastery over the genii. In the Book of Wisdom he is made to say, "All such things as are either secret or manifest, them I know." Josephus attributes to him the formulæ and spells of exorcism, and in Eccles. ii. 8 the words rendered "musical instruments" (shiddah and shiddoth; R.V., "concubines very many") were understood by the Rabbis to mean that he was the lord over male and female demons.[4]

3. Far more precious than practical or intellectual ability is the gift of *moral* wisdom, which Solomon so greatly appreciated but so imperfectly attained. Yet he felt that "wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom." The world gives that name to many higher and lower manifestations of capacity and attainment, but wisdom is in Scripture the one law of all true life. In that magnificent outburst of Semitic poetry, the twenty-eighth chapter of the Book of Job, after

[1] *E.g.*, Prov. vi. 10.

[2] 1 Kings x. 1; LXX., *ἐν αἰνίγμασι*. See Wünsche, *Die Räthselweisheit*, 1883; Grätz, *Hist. of the Jews*, i. 162. For specimens of her traditional puzzles see the author's *Solomon*, p. 135 (Men of the Bible).

[3] "And Solomon was David's heir, and said, Ye folk! we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been given everything: verily this is a Divine grace" (Qur'an, *Sura* xxvii. 15). For the legend of Solomon and the hoopoes, see *Sura* 27.

[4] According to Suidas (s.v., 'Εζεκίας) Hezekiah found his (magic?) formulæ for the cure of diseases engraved on the posts of the Temple. See Targum on Esth. i. 2; Eccles. ii. 8.

pointing out that there is such a thing as natural knowledge—that there is a vein for the silver, and ore of gold, and a place of sapphires, and reservoirs of subterranean fire—the writer asks: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" After showing with marvellous power that it is beyond man's unaided search—that the depths and the seas say, "It is not in us," and destruction and death have but heard the fame thereof with their ears—he adds with one great crash of concluding music, "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. . . . And unto man He said, *Behold, the fear of the Lord, tha is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*" And again we read, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.*"[2] The sated cynic of the Book of the Ecclesiastes, or one who had studied, not without dissatisfaction, his sad experience, adds, "*Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*" And in answer to the question "*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?*" St. James, the Lord's brother, who had evidently been a deep student of the Sapiential literature, does not answer, "He who understands all mysteries," or, "He who speaks with the tongue of men or of angels," but, "Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." Men whom the world has deemed wise have often fallen into utter infatuation, as it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness"; but heavenly wisdom may belong to the most ignorant and simplehearted. It is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

We should observe, however, that the *Chokhmah*,

[1] Job xxviii. 23, 28. [2] Prov. i. 7.

or wisdom-literature of the Jews, while it incessantly exalts morality, and sometimes almost attains to a perception of the spiritual life, was neither prophetic nor priestly in its character. It bears the same relation to the teaching of the prophets on the one hand, and the priests on the other, as morality does to religion and to externalism. Its teaching is loftier and truer than the petty insistence of Pharisaism on meats and drinks and divers washings, in that it deals with the weightier matters of the law; but it does not attain to the passionate spirituality of the greater Hebrew seers. It cares next to nothing for ritual, and therefore rises above the developed Judaism of the post-exilic epoch. It is lofty and true inasmuch as it breathes the spirit of the Ten Commandments, but it has not learnt the freedom of love and the beatitudes of perfect union with God. In one word, it finds its culmination in Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus, rather than in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of St. John.

We cannot better conclude this chapter than with the eulogy of the son of Sirach: "Solomon reigned in a peaceable time and was honoured; for God made all quiet round about him, that he might build a house in His name and prepare His sanctuary for ever. How wise wast thou in thy youth, and, as a flood, filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables. Thy name went far unto the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved. The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs, and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations. By the name of the Lord God, who is called the Lord God of Israel, thou didst gather gold as tin, and didst multiply silver as lead."[1]

[1] Ecclus. xlvii. 13-18.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOLOMON'S COURT AND KINGDOM

1 KINGS iv. 1—34.

"But what more oft in nations grown corrupt
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty?"
Samson Agonistes.

WHEN David was dead, and Solomon was established on his throne, his first thoughts were turned to the consolidation of his kingdom. He was probably quite a youth.[1] He was not, nor did he ever desire to be, a warlike prince; but he was compelled to make himself secure from two enemies—Hadad and Rezon—who began almost at once to threaten his frontiers. Of these, however, we shall speak later on, since it is only towards the close of Solomon's reign that they seem to have given serious trouble. If the second psalm is by Solomon it may point to some early disturbances among heathen neighbours which he had successfully put down.

The only actual expedition which Solomon ever made was one against a certain Hamath-Zobah, to which, however, very little importance can be attached.

[1] Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vii. 8. According to one tradition he lived to fifty-three (Ewald, iii. 208), and was only twelve when he succeeded David.

It is simply mentioned in one line in the Book of Chronicles, and it is hard to believe—considering that Rezon had possession of Damascus—that Solomon was master of the *great* Hamath.[1] He made a material alteration in the military organisation of his kingdom by establishing a standing army of fourteen hundred war-chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he dispersed in various cities and barracks, keeping some of them at Jerusalem.[2]

In order to save his kingdom from attack Solomon expended vast sums on the fortification of frontier towns. In the north he fortified Hazor; in the north-west Megiddo. The passes to Jerusalem on the west were rendered safe by the fortresses at Upper and Nether Bethhoron. The southern districts were over-awed by the building of Baalath and Tamar, "the palm-city," which is described as "in the wilderness in the land,"—perhaps in the desolate tract on the road from Hebron to Elath.[3] Movers thinks that Hazezon-Tamar or Engedi is meant, as this town is called Tamar in Ezek. xlvii. 19.

As the king grew more and more in power he gave full reins to his innate love of magnificence. We can best estimate the sudden leap of the kingdom into luxurious civilisation if we contrast the royalty of Saul

[1] 2 Chron. viii. 3. Ewald thinks it is confirmed by 2 Kings xiv. 28, where, however, the Hebrew is obscure.

[2] 1 Kings x. 26.

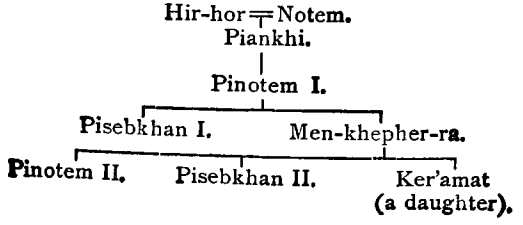
[3] 1 Kings ix. 18. Here the "Q'rî," the marginal, or "read" text, has Tadmor (*i.e.*, Palmyra), as also in 2 Chron. viii. 4. But this Tamar (Ezek. xlvii. 19, xlviii. 28) is "*in the land*" on the south border. In the Chronicles Tadmor is the right reading, for the chronicler is speaking of Hamath-Zobah and the north. It is not at all unlikely that Solomon also built Tadmor (Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vi. 1) to protect his commerce on the route to the Euphrates.

with that of Solomon. Saul was little more than a peasant-prince, a local emîr, and such state as he had was of the humblest description. But Solomon vied with the gorgeous secular dynasts of historic empires.

His position had become much more splendid owing to his alliance with the King of Egypt—an alliance of which his humbler predecessors would scarcely have dreamed. We are not told the name of his Egyptian bride, but she must have been the daughter of one of the last kings of the twenty-first Tanite dynasty—either Psinaces, or Psusennes II.[1] The dynasty had been founded at Tanis (Zoan) about B.C. 1100 by an ambitious priest named Hir-hor. It only lasted for five generations. Whatever other dower Solomon received with this Egyptian princess, his father-in-law rendered him one signal service. He advanced from Egypt with an army against the Canaanite town of Gezer, which he conquered and destroyed.[2] Solomon rebuilt it as

[1] The forty-fifth psalm is supposed by old interpreters to have been an epithalamium on this occasion, but was probably much later. Perhaps notices like 1 Kings iii. 1-3 (the Egyptian alliance), the admonition in 1 Kings ix. 1-9 and the luxury described in x. 14-29, are meant as warning notes of what follows in xi. 1-8 (the apostasy), 9-13 (the prophecy of disruption), and 14-43 (the concluding disaster).

[2] Gezer is Abu-Shusheh, or Tell-el-Gezer, between Ramleh and Jerusalem (Oliphant, *Haifa*, p. 253), on the lower border of Ephraim. Ewald identifies it with Geshur, the town of Talmai, Absalom's grandfather. See Lenormant, *Hist. anc. de l'Orient.*, i. 337-43. The genealogy of this dynasty is thus given by Brugsch-Bey (Gen. Table iv.), *Hist. of Egypt*, vol. ii. :—



an outpost of defence for Jerusalem. Further than this the Egyptian alliance did not prove to be of much use. The last king of this weak twenty-first dynasty was succeeded B.C. 990 by the founder of a new Bubastite dynasty, the great Shishak I. (Shesonk, Σεσόνχωσις), the protector of Jeroboam and the plunderer of Jerusalem and its Temple. Ker'amat, niece of the last king of the dynasty, married Shishak, the founder of the new dynasty, and was the mother of U-Sark-on I. (Zerah the Ethiopian).

It has been a matter of dispute among the Rabbis whether Solomon was commendable or blameworthy for contracting this foreign alliance. If we judge him simply from the secular standpoint, nothing could be more obviously politic than the course he took. Nor did he break any law in marrying Pharaoh's daughter. Moses had not forbidden the union with an Egyptian woman. Still, from the religious point of view, it was inevitable that such a connexion would involve consequences little in accordance with the theocratic ideal. The kings of Judah must not be judged as though they were ordinary sovereigns. They were meant to be something more than mere worldly potentates. The Egyptian alliance, instead of flattering the pride, only wounded the susceptibilities of the later Jews. The Rabbis had a fantastic notion that Shimei had been Solomon's teacher, and that the king did not fall into the error of wedding an alien [1] until Shimei had been driven from Jerusalem.[2] That there was some sense

[1] See Deut. xxiii. 7, 8.

[2] Schwab's *Berakhoth*, p. 252; Hershon, *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 25. In Sanhedrin, ff. 21, 22, there is another trace of the dislike with which the marriage (though not forbidden, Deut. xxiii. 7, 8) was regarded: "When Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, Gabriel

of doubt in Solomon's mind appears from the statement in 2 Chron. viii. 11, that he deemed it unfit for his bride to have her residence on Mount Moriah, a spot hallowed by the presence of the Ark of God.[1] That she became a proselytess has been suggested, but it is most unlikely. Had this been the case it would have been mentioned in contrast with the heathenism of the fair idolatresses who in later years beguiled the king's heart. On the other hand, the princess, who was his chief if not his earliest bride, does not seem to have asked for any shrine or chapel for the practice of her Egyptian rites. This is the more remarkable since Solomon, ashamed of the humble cedar house of David —which would look despicable to a lady who had lived in "the gigantic edifices, and labyrinthine palace of Egyptian kings"[2]—expended vast sums in building her a palace which should seem worthy of her royal race.

From this time forward the story of Solomon becomes more the record of a passing pageant preserved for us in loosely arranged fragments. It can never be one tithe so interesting as the history of a human heart with its sufferings and passions. "Solomon in all his glory," that figure so unique, so lonely in its wearisome pomp, can never stir our sympathy or win our affection as does the natural, impetuous David, or even the fallen, unhappy Saul. "The low sun makes the colour." The bright gleams and dark shadows of David's life are

descended and fixed a reed in the sea. A sandbank formed around it on which *Rome* was subsequently built." In Shabbath, ff. 51, 52, we are told that "the princess brought with her one thousand different kinds of musical instruments, and *taught Solomon the chants to his various idols.*"

[1] No trace of any such misgiving is found in the Book of Kings.

[2] "Seine Liebhaberei sind kostbare Bauten, fremde Weiber, reiche Prachtentfaltung" (Kittel, ii. 160).

more instructive than the dull monotony of Solomon's magnificence.

The large space of Scripture devoted to him in the Books of Kings and Chronicles is occupied almost exclusively with the details of architecture and display. It is only in the first and last sections of his story that we catch the least glimpse of the man himself. In the central section we see nothing of him, but are absorbed in measurements and descriptions which have a purely archæological, or, at the best, a dimly symbolic significance. The man is lost in the monarch, the monarch in the appurtenances of his royal display. His annals degenerate into the record of a sumptuous parade.

The fourth chapter of the Book of Kings gives us the constitution of his court as it was in the middle of his reign, when two of his daughters were already married. It need not detain us long.

The highest officers of the kingdom were called *Sarim*, "princes," a title which in David's reign had been borne almost alone by Joab, who was *Sar-ha-zaba*, or captain of the host. The son of Zadok[1] is named first as "the priest." The two chief secretaries (*Sopherim*) were Elihoreph and Ahiah. They inherited the office of their father Shavsha (1 Chron. xviii. 16),[2] who had been the secretary of David. It was their duty to record decrees and draw up the documents of state. Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, continued to hold the office of annalist or historiographer (*Mazkîr*), the officer known as the Waka Nuwish in Persian courts.[3] Azariah

[1] Perhaps rather "the grandson." He was the son of Ahimaaz (comp Gen. xxix. 5; Ezra v. 1, where *son* = *grandson*).

[2] Shisha and Shavsha are perhaps corruptions of Seraiah (2 Sam. viii. 17).

[3] Comp. Esth. vi. 1. LXX., Isa. xxxvi. 3, ὁ ὑπομνηματογράφος

was over the twelve prefects (*Nitzabim*), or farmers-general, who administered the revenues.[1] His brother Zabud became "priest" and "king's friend."[2] Ahishar was "over the household" (*al-hab-Baith*); that is, he was the chamberlain, vizier, or mayor of the palace, wearing on his shoulder the key which was the symbol of his authority.[3] Adoniram or Adoram, who had been tax-collector for David, still held that onerous and invidious office,[4] which subsequently, in his advanced old age, cost him his life. Benaiah succeeded to the chief-captaincy of Joab. We hear nothing more of him, but the subsequent history shows that when David gathered around him this half alien and wholly mercenary force in a country which had no standing army, he turned the sovereignty into what the Greeks would have called a tyranny. As the only armed force in the kingdom the body-guard overawed opposition, and was wholly at the disposal of the king. These troops were to Solomon at Jerusalem what the Prætorians were to Tiberius at Rome.

The chief points of interest presented by the list are these:—

1. First we mark the absence of any prophet. Neither Nathan nor Gad is even mentioned. The pure ray of Divine illumination is overpowered by the glitter of material prosperity.

2. Secondly, the priests are quite subordinate. They are only mentioned fifth in order, and Abiathar is named

2 Sam. viii. 17, ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων. Jerome, "*a commentariis*." Comp. Suet., *Aug.* 79, "*qui e memoria Augusti*."

[1] It is a somewhat ominous fact that *netsib* means properly an ἐπιτειχισμός, a garrison in a hostile country.

[2] The king's friend (2 Sam. xv. 37) seems to have been a sort of confidential privy councillor (Prov. xxii. 11).

[3] Isa. xxii. 21. [4] 2 Sam. xx. 24.

with Zadok, though after his deposition he was living in enforced retirement.[1] The sacerdotal authority was at this time quite overshadowed by the royal. In all the elaborate details of the pomp which attended the consecration of the Temple, Solomon is everything, the priests comparatively nothing. Zadok is not even mentioned as taking any part in the sacrifices in spite of his exalted rank. Solomon acts throughout as supreme head of the Church. Nor was this unnatural, since the two capital events in the history of the worship of Jehovah—the removal of the Ark to Mount Zion, and the suggestion, inception, and completion of the building of the Temple—were due to Solomon and David, not to Zadok or Abiathar. The priests, throughout the monarchy, suggest nothing, inaugurate nothing. They are lost in functions and formal ceremonies. They are but obedient administrative servants, and, so far from protecting religion, they acquiesce with tame indifference in every innovation and every apostasy. History has few titles which form so poor a claim to distinction as that of Levitic priest.

3. Further, we have two curious and significant phenomena. The title "the priest" is given to Azariah, who is first mentioned among the court functionaries. Solomon had not the least intention to allow either the priestly or the much loftier prophetic functions to interfere with his autocracy. He did not choose that there should be any danger of a priest usurping an exorbitant influence, as Hir-hor had done in Egypt, or Ethbaal afterwards did in the court of Tyre, or Thomas à-Becket in the court of England, or Torquemada in that of Spain. He was too much a king to submit to

[1] Possibly this clause is an interpolation.

priestly domination. He therefore appointed one who should be "the priest" for courtly and official purposes, and should stand in immediate subordination to himself.

4. The Nathan whose two sons, Azariah and Zabud, held such high positions, was in all probability not Nathan the Prophet, who is rarely introduced without his distinctive title, but Nathan, the younger brother of Solomon, in whose line the race of David was continued after the extinction of the elder branch in Jeconiah. Here again we note the union of *civil* with priestly functions. Zabud is called "a priest" though he is a layman, a prince of the tribe of Judah. Nor was this the first instance in which princes of the royal house had found maintenance, occupation, and high official rank by being in some sort engaged in the functions of the priesthood. Already in David's reign we find the title "priests" (*Kohanim*) given to the sons of David in the list of court officials[1]—"*and David's sons were priests.*" In this we trace the possible results of Phœnician influences.

5. Incidentally it is pleasing to find that, though Solomon put Adonijah to death, he stood in close and kindly relations with his other brothers, and gave high

[1] 2 Sam. viii. 18. Even "Ira the Jairite" is called "a priest" (2 Sam. xx. 26). An attempt has been made to explain the word away because it obviously clashes with Levitic ordinances; but the word "priest" could not be used in two different senses in two consecutive lines. Dogmatic considerations have tampered with the obvious meaning of the word. The LXX. omits it, and in the case of David's sons calls them αὐλάρχαι. The A.V. renders it "chief officer." The Vulgate wrongly refers it to Zadok (filius Sadoc *sacerdotis*). Movers (*Krit. Unters.*, 301 ff.) renders it "court chaplains." Already in 1 Chron. xviii. 17 we find that the title gave offence, and we read instead, "And the sons of David *were at the hand of the king*" (see Ewald, *Alterthumsk*, p. 276). Compare the title "Bishop of Osnaburg," borne by Frederick, Duke of York, son of George III.

promotions to the sons of the brothers who stood nearest to him in age, in one of whom we see the destined ancestor of the future Messiah.[1]

6. The growth of imposing officialism, and its accompanying gulf between the king and his people, is marked by the first appearance of "the chamberlain" as a new functionary. On him fell the arrangement of court pageants and court etiquette. The chamberlain in despotic Eastern courts becomes a personage of immense importance, because he controls the right of admission into the royal presence. Such officers, even when chosen from the lowest rank of slaves—like Eutropius the eunuch-minister of Arcadius,[2] or Olivier le Daim, the barber-minister of Louis XI.—often absorb no mean part of the influence of the sovereign with whom they are brought into daily connexion. In the court of Solomon the chamberlain stands only ninth in order; but three centuries later, in the days of Hezekiah, he has become the greatest of the officials, and "Eliakim who was over the household" is placed before Shebna, the influential scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph the recorder.[3]

7. Last on the list stands the minister who has the ominous title of *al-ham-Mas*, or "over the tribute." The Mas means the "levy," corvée, or forced labour. In other words, Adoram was overseer of the soccagers. Saul had required an overseer of the flocks, and David a guardian of the treasury, but Adoram is not mentioned

[1] 2 Sam. v. 14; Zech. xii. 12; Luke iii. 31.

[2] The degraded and ominous apparitions of *Sarisim* (eunuchs) probably began at the court of Solomon on a large scale, though the name occurs in the days of David (1 Sam. viii. 15; 1 Chron. xxviii. 1). In the Northern Kingdom we first hear of them in the harem of the polygamous Ahab.

[3] 2 Kings xviii. 18; Isa. xxii. 15.

till late in his reign.[1] The *gravamen* of David's numbering of the people seems to have lain in the intention to subject them to a poll tax, or to personal service, such as had become necessary to maintain the expenses of the court. It is obvious that, as royalty developed from the conception of the theocratic king to that of the Oriental despot, the stern warning of Samuel to the people of Israel was more and more fulfilled. They had said, "Nay, but we will have a king to reign over us, when Jehovah was their king"; and Samuel had told them how much less blessed was bondage with ease than their strenuous liberty. He had warned them that their king would take their sons for his runners and charioteers and reapers and soldiers and armourers, and their daughters for his perfumers and confectioners; and that he would seize their fields and vineyards for his courtiers, and claim the tithes of their possession, and use their asses, and put their oxen to his work. The word "*Mas*" representing soccage, serfdom, forced labour (corvée; Germ., *Frohndienst*), first became odiously familiar in the days of Solomon.

Solomon was an expensive king, and the Jewish kings had no private revenue from which the necessary resources could be supplied. In order to secure contributions for the maintenance of the royal establishment, Solomon appointed his twelve Prefects. The list of them is incorporated from a document so ancient that in several instances the names have dropped out, and only "son of" remains.[2] The districts entirely and designedly ignored the old tribal limits, which

[1] 2 Sam. xx. 24. He is not mentioned in 1 Chron. xxvii. 25-31.

[2] This use of patronymics only is common among the Arabs, but not in Scripture (Reuss, *Hist. d. Isr.*, i. 423).

Solomon probably wished to obliterate. Ben-Hur administered the hill country of Ephraim; Ben-Dekar had his headquarters in Dan; Ben-Hesed had the maritime plain; Ben-Abinadab the fertile region of Carmel, and he was wedded to Solomon's daughter Taphath;[1] Baana, son of Ahilud, managed the plain of Esdraelon; Ben-Geber the mountainous country east of Jordan, including Gilead and Argob with its basaltic towns; Ahinadab, son of Iddo, was officer in Mahanaim; Ahimaaz in Naphtali (he was married to Solomon's daughter Basmath, and was perhaps the son of Zadok); Baanah, son of David's faithful Hushai, was in Asher; Shimei, son of Elah, in Benjamin; Jehoshaphat in Issachar. Geber administered alone the ancient dominions of Sihon and Og. We see with surprise that Judah seems to have been exempted from the burdens imposed on the other districts, and if so the impolitic exemption was a main cause of the subsequent jealousies.[2]

The chief function of these officers was to furnish provisions for the immense numbers who were connected with the court. The curious list is given of the provision required for one day—thirty measures of fine flour, sixty of bread,[3] ten fat oxen, twenty pasture

[1] If he was the son of David's elder brother (1 Sam. xvi. 8, xvii. 13) he was Solomon's first cousin. The materialistic or non-religious element in Solomon seems to come out in the names of his only known children. The element "Jehovah," afterwards so universal, does not occur in them. Basmath, characteristically, means "fragrant"; Taphath is perhaps connected with טָפַת, to go mincingly; Rehoboam means "enlarger of the people."

[2] The LXX. indeed reads *καὶ νασὲφ εἷς ἐν γῇ Ἰούδα* ("and he was the only officer in the land of Judah"). But this would make thirteen fiscal overseers. The Targum, adopting the same reading, says that the thirteenth *nitzab* was to maintain the king in the intercalary month.

[3] Taking the *cor* at a low estimate this would amount to eighteen thousand pounds of bread a day.

oxen, and one hundred sheep, besides the delicacies of harts, gazelles, fallow-deer, and fatted guinea-hens or swans.[1] Bunsen reckons that this would provide for about fifteen thousand persons. In this there is nothing extraordinary, though the number is disproportionate to the smallness of the kingdom. About the same number were daily supported by the kings of the great empire of Persia.[2] We see how rapidly the state of royalty had developed when we compare Solomon's superb surroundings with the humble palace of Ish-bosheth less than fifty years earlier—a palace of which the only guard was a single sleepy woman, who had been sifting wheat in the noontide, and had fallen asleep over her task in the porch.[3]

Yet in the earlier years of the reign, while the people, dazzled by the novel sense of national importance, felt the stimulus given to trade and industry, the burden was not painfully felt. They multiplied in numbers, and lived under their vines and fig trees in peace and festivity.[4] But much of their prosperity was hollow and shortlived. Wealth led to vice and corruption, and in place of the old mountain breezes of freedom which purified the air, the nation, like Issachar, became like an ass crouching between two burdens, and bowing its shoulders to the yoke in the hot valley of sensuous servitude.

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay!'

. . .

[1] 1 Kings iv. 23, בְּרֻבָּרִים. Vulg., *Avium altilium.*

[2] Athen., *Deipnos.*, iv. 146.

[3] 2 Sam. iv. 6 (LXX.).

[4] This description of *agricultural* felicity soon became an anachronism.

It is impossible to overlook the general drift of Jewish royalty towards pure materialism in the days of Solomon. We search in vain for the lofty spirituality which survived even in the rough epoch of the Judges and the rude simplicity of David's earlier reign. The noble aspirations which throb in one Davidic psalm are worth all the gorgeous formalism of the Temple service. Amid the luxuries of plenty and the feasts of wine on the lees there seems to have been an ever-deeping famine of the Word of God.

There was one innovation, which struck the imagination of Solomon's contemporaries, but was looked on with entire disfavour by those who had been trained in the old pious days. Solomon had immense stables for his chariot horses (*susim*), and the swift riding horses of his couriers (*parashim*).[1] It seems to have been Solomon's ambition to equal or outshine "the chariots of Pharaoh,"[2] with which his Egyptian queen had been familiar at Tanis. This feature of his reign is dwelt upon in the Arabian legends, as well as in all the historical records of his greatness.[3] But the maintenance of a cavalry force had always been discouraged by the religious teachers of Israel. The use of horses

[1] Not "dromedaries" (A.V.). The ruins of his stables are still pointed out at Jerusalem. He traded with Egypt for horses and chariots which his merchants brought to Tekoa, and he then sold them at a profit to the Hittite princes. The forty thousand stalls of 1 Kings iv. 26 should doubtless be four thousand (2 Chron. ix. 25), as Solomon only had fourteen hundred chariots (1 Kings x. 26). In 1 Kings x. 28 the meaning and reading is "as for the export of horses, which Solomon got from Egypt *even from Tekoa*" (LXX., καὶ ἐκ Θεκουέ), "the royal merchants used to fetch a troop of horses at a price." The "linen yarn" of the A.V. is a mistranslation.

[2] Cant. i. 9.

[3] 1 Kings v. 6, ix. 19, x. 26, 28. Two of these passages are omitted in the LXX. Comp. 1 Kings xvi. 9.

in war is forbidden in Deuteronomy.[1] Joshua had houghed the horses of the Canaanites, and burned their chariots at Misrephoth-maim. David had followed his example. Barak had defeated the iron chariots of Sisera, and David the splendid cavalry of Hadadezer with the simple infantry of Israel.[2] The spirit of the olden faithfulness spoke in such words as, "Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God." Solomon's[3] successors discovered that they had not gained in strength by adopting this branch of military service in their hilly and rocky land. They found that "a horse is but a vain thing to save a man, neither shall he deliver any man by his great strength."[4]

For a time, however, Solomon's strenuous centralisation was successful. His dominion extended, at least nominally, from Tiphzah (Thapsacus), beside the ford on the west bank of the Euphrates, to the Mediterranean; over the whole domain of the Philistines; and from Damascus to "the river of Egypt," that is, the Rhinokolura or Wady el-Areesh. The names Jeroboam and Rehoboam imply that they were born in an epoch of prosperity.[5] But the sequel proves that it was that sort of empire which,

> "Like expanded gold,
> Exchanges solid strength for feeble splendour."[6]

[1] Deut. xvii. 16.

[2] Josh. xi. 9; 1 Sam. viii. 11, 12; 2 Sam. viii. 4.

[3] The energetic dislike to the importation or use of horses is also found in Isa. ii. 7, xxx. 16, 17, xxxi. 1-3; Micah v. 10-14; Zech. ix. 10, x. 5, xii. 4.

[4] Psalm xxxiii. 17, lxxvi. 6, cxlvii. 10.

[5] Compare Poludemos, Eurudemos.

[6] Xen., *Anab.*, i. 4, 11; Arrian, ii. 13, iii. 7. For the phrase "on *this* side of the river," see *ante*, p. 18.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TEMPLE.

1 KINGS v., vi., vii.

"And his next son, for wealth and wisdom famed,
The clouded Ark of God, till then in tents
Wandering, shall in a glorious temple enshrine."
Paradise Lost, xii. 340.

AFTER the destructive battle of Aphek, in which the Philistines had defeated Israel, slain the two sons of Eli, and taken captive the Ark of God, they had inflicted a terrible vengeance on the old sanctuary at Shiloh. They had burnt the young men in the fire, and slain the priests with the sword, and no widows were left to make lamentation.[1] It is true that, terrified by portents and diseases, the Philistines after a time restored the Ark, and the Tabernacle of the wilderness with its brazen altar still gave sacredness to the great high place at Gibeon, to which apparently it had been removed.[2] Nevertheless, the old worship seems to have languished till it received a new and powerful impulse from the religious earnestness of David. He had the mind of a patriot-statesman as well as of a soldier, and he felt that a nation is nothing without its sacred memories. Those memories clustered round the now-discredited Ark. Its capture, and its parade

[1] Psalm lxxviii. 58-64. [2] According to 2 Chron. i. 3.

as a trophy of victory in the shrine of Dagon, had robbed it of all its superstitious prestige as a fetish; but, degraded as it had been, it still continued to be the one inestimably precious historic relic which enshrined the memories of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and the dawn of its heroic age.

As soon as David had given to his people the boon of a unique capital, nothing could be more natural than the wish to add sacredness to the glory of the capital by making it the centre of the national worship. According to the Chronicles, David—feeling it a reproach that he himself should dwell in palaces ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion while the Ark of God dwelt between curtains—had made unheard-of preparations to build a house for God. But it had been decreed unfit that the sanctuary should be built by a man whose hands were red with the blood of many wars, and he had received the promise that the great work should be accomplished by his son.[1]

Into that work Solomon threw himself with hearty zeal in the month *Zif*[2] of the fourth year of his reign, when his kingdom was consolidated.[3] It commanded

[1] David's suggestion does not seem to have been received favourably at first (2 Sam. vii. 1-17). The chronicler (1 Chron. xxviii. 19) indulges in the amazing hyperbole that David had been made to understand all the works of the pattern of the Temple "*in writing* from the hand of the Lord."

[2] The ancient Israelites named their months from the seasons, as did the Canaanites. Only four of those old names are preserved in the Bible: *Zif*, "brightness" (comp. *Floreal, Lenz*); *Bul*, "rain-month" (*Pluviose*); *Abib*, "corn-ear month"; *Ethanim*, "fruit-month" (*Fructidor*).

[3] In 1 Kings vi. 1 we read "in the 480th year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt." This may possibly be a later gloss. The LXX., Origen, Josephus, etc., omit the words, and the Old Testament does not, as a rule, date events by epochs.

all his sympathies as an artist, a lover of magnificence, and a ruler bent on the work of centralisation. It was a task to which he was bound by the solemn exhortation of his father, and he felt, doubtless, its political as well as its religious importance. With his sincere desire to build to God's glory was mingled a prophetic conviction that his task would be fraught with immense issues for the future of his people and of all the world. The presence of the Temple left its impress on the very name of Jerusalem. Although it has nothing to do with the Temple or with Solomon, it became known to the heathen world as Hierosolyma, which, as we see from Eupolemos (Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, ix. 34), the Gentile world supposed to mean "the Temple (*Hieron*) of Solomon."

The materials already provided were of priceless value. David had consecrated to God the spoils which he had won from conquered kings. We must reject, as the exaggerations of national vanity, the monstrous numbers which now stand in the text of the chronicler; but a king whose court was simple and inexpensive was quite able to amass treasures of gold and silver, brass and iron, precious marbles and onyx stones. Solomon had only to add to these sacred stores.[1]

He inherited the friendship which David had enjoyed,

Further, the date is full of difficulties, though our received chronology is based on it. It was perhaps arrived at after the Exile, by counting backwards from the Decree of Cyrus, B.C. 535. See note at the end of the volume.

[1] 1 Chron. xxii. 14 says that David (comp. xxviii., xxix.) "with much labour" (A.V., "in my trouble," 1 Chron. xxii. 14) bequeathed to Solomon 100,000 talents of gold and 100,000 talents of silver! This impossible number is very considerably reduced in 1 Chron. xxix. 4, where the mention of *darics* shows an author living in the captivity.

with Hiram, King of Tyre, who, according to the strange phrase of the Vatican Septuagint, sent his servants "to anoint" Solomon. The friendliest overtures passed between the two kings in letters, to which Josephus appeals as still extant. A commercial treaty was made by which Solomon engaged to furnish the Tyrian king with annual revenues of wheat, barley, and oil,[1] and Hiram put at Solomon's disposal the skilled labour of an army of Sidonian wood-cutters and artisans.[2] The huge trunks of cedar and cypress were sent rushing down the heights of Lebanon by schlittage, and laboriously dragged by road or river to the shore. There they were constructed into immense rafts, which were floated a hundred miles along the coast to Joppa, where they were again dragged with enormous toil for thirty-five miles up the steep and rocky roads to Jerusalem. For more than twenty years, while Solomon was building the Temple and his various royal constructions, Jerusalem became a hive of ceaseless and varied industry. Its ordinary inhabitants must have been swelled by an army of Canaanite serfs and Phœnician artisans to whom residences were assigned in Ophel. There lived the hewers and bevellers of stone; the cedar-cutters of Gebal or Biblos;[3] the cunning work-

[1] Comp. Ezek. xxvii. 17; Acts xii. 20.

[2] According to Tatian, *Orat. ad Græc.*, p. 171, Solomon married a daughter of Hiram. Hiram, like the Queen of Sheba, acknowledges Jehovah as the (local) God of Israel. He was the son of Abibaal, and, according to Menander (a Greek historian of Ephesus about B.C. 300, who consulted Tyrian records), he began to reign at nineteen, and reigned thirty-four years. Josephus thinks that there were two successive Hirams.

[3] *Giblim*, 1 Kings v. 18, where "and the stone-squarers" should be "and especially the men of Gebal." LXX., Alex., οἱ Βίβλιοι; Vulg., *Giblii*. Comp. Ezek. xxvii. 9, Psalm lxxxiii. 7, "The ancients of Gebal and the wise thereof were in thee." It is now Jebeil, between Bey-

men in gold or brass; the bronze-casters who made their moulds in the clay ground of the Jordan valley; the carvers and engravers; the dyers who stained wool with the purple of the murex, and the scarlet dye of the trumpet fish; the weavers and embroiderers of fine linen. Every class of labourer was put into requisition, from the descendants of the Gibeonite *Nethinim*, who were rough hewers of wood and drawers of water, to the trained artificers whose beautiful productions were the wonder of the world. The "father," or master-workman, of the whole community was a half-caste, who also bore the name of Hiram, and was the son of a woman of Naphtali by a Tyrian father.[1]

Some writers have tried to minimise Solomon's work as a builder, and have spoken of the Temple as an exceedingly insignificant structure which would not stand a moment's comparison with the smallest and humblest of our own cathedrals. Insignificant in size it certainly was, but we must not forget its costly

rout and Tripoli. The Phœnician and Sidonian artisans were famous from the earliest antiquity for metal-work, embroidery, dyes, ship-building, and the fine arts (Hom., *Il.*, xxiii. 743; *Od.*, iv. 614-18, xv. 425; Herod., iii. 19, vii. 23, 96, etc.).

[1] 2 Chron. ii. 13, iv. 16, where "a cunning man of Huram my father's" should be "even Huram, my father," *i.e.*, master-workman or deviser (comp. Gen. xlv. 8). In Chronicles he is called the son of a Danite mother. Here we have another of the manipulations used by later Jewish tradition to get rid of what they disliked; for in Eupolemos (Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, ix. 34) Hiram is said to belong to the family of David. "Quite a little romance," as Wellhausen says, "has been constructed out of the fact that the chronicler assigns his mother to the tribe of Dan; but it is not worth repeating, being a mass of hypotheses." To the dislike of Sidonian and semi-Sidonian influence, we perhaps owe the notion that David had already received a design from the hand of God Himself (1 Chron. xxviii. 11-19) (Ewald, iii. 227). Jerome mentions the Jewish fable that the artist Hiram was of the family of Aholiab, the artist of the wilderness.

splendour, the remote age in which the work was achieved, and the truly stupendous constructions which the design required. Mount Moriah was selected as a site hallowed by the tradition of Abraham's sacrifice, and more recently by David's vision of the Angel of the Pestilence with his drawn sword on the threshing-floor of the Jebusite Prince Araunah.[1] But to utilise this doubly consecrated area involved almost superhuman difficulties, which would have been avoided if the loftier but less suitable height of the Mount of Olives could have been chosen. The rugged summit had to be enlarged to a space of five hundred yards square, and this level was supported by Cyclopean walls, which have long been the wonder of the world.[2] The magnificent wall on the east side, known as "the Jews' wailing-place," is doubtless the work of Solomon, and after outlasting "the drums and tramplings of a hundred triumphs," it remains to this day in uninjured massiveness. One of the finely bevelled stones is 38½ feet long and 7 feet high, and weighs more than 100 tons. These vast stones were hewn from a quarry above the level of the wall, and lowered by rollers down an inclined plane. Part of the old wall rises 30 feet

[1] "Araunah the king" (2 Sam. xxiv. 23). The Temple Mount was usually called the "Mount of the House." It is only called Mount Moriah in 2 Chron. iii. 1. It cannot be regarded as certain that "the land of Moriah" (Gen. xxii. 2) is identical with it.

[2] "The present platform is 1521 feet long on the east, 940 on the south, 1617 on the west, 1020 on the north. Bartlett, *Walks about Jerusalem*, pp. 161-70; Williams, *The Holy City*, pp. 315-62. Kugle, *Gesch. der Baukunst*, p. 125. The excellent stone was supplied by quarries at Jerusalem itself. Comp. "Cavati sub terra montes" (Tac., *Hist.*, v. 12). It may have been extended by Justinian when he built his church. See Ewald, iii. 232, "The Mount of the Temple was 500 yards square"; *Middoth*, c. 2. Comp. Ezek. xiii. 15-20, xlv. 2; Josephus, *Antt.*, XV. xi. 3.

above the present level of the soil, but a far larger part of the height lies hidden 80 feet under the accumulated *débris* of the often captured city. At the south-west angle, by Robinson's arch, three pavements were discovered, one beneath the other, showing the gradual filling up of the valley; and on the lowest of these were found the broken *voussoirs* of the arch. In Solomon's day the whole of this mighty wall was visible. On one of the lowest stones have been discovered the Phœnician paint-marks which indicated where each of the huge masses, so carefully dressed, edge-drafted, and bevelled, was to be placed in the structure. The caverns, quarries, water storages, and subterranean conduits hewn out of the solid rock, over which Jerusalem is built, could only have been constructed at the cost of immeasurable toil. They would be wonderful even with our infinitely more rapid methods and more powerful agencies; but when we remember that they were made three thousand years ago we do not wonder that their massiveness has haunted the imagination of so many myriads of visitors from every nation.

It was perhaps from his Egyptian father-in-law that Solomon, to his own cost, learnt the secret of forced labour which alone rendered such undertakings possible. In their Egyptian bondage the forefathers of Israel had been fatally familiar with the ugly word *Mas*, the labour wrung from them by hard task-masters.[1] In the reign of Solomon it once more became only too common on the lips of the burdened people.[2]

Four classes were subject to it.

1. The lightest labour was required from the native freeborn Israelites (*ezrach*). They were not regarded

[1] Exod. i., ii.

[2] 1 Kings iv. 6, v. 13, 14, 17, 18, ix. 15, 21, xii. 18.

as bondsmen (עֲבָדִים), yet 30,000 of these were required in relays of 10,000 to work, one month in every three, in the forest of Lebanon.[1]

2. There were the strangers, or resident aliens (*Gerim*), such as the Phœnicians and Giblites, who were Hiram's subjects and worked for pay.

3. There were three classes of slaves—those taken in war, or sold for debt, or home-born.

4. Lowest and most wretched of all, there were the vassal Canaanites (*Toshabim*), from whom were drawn those 70,000 burden-bearers, and 80,000 quarry-men, the Helots of Palestine, who were placed under the charge of 3600 Israelite officers. The blotches of smoke are still visible on the walls and roofs of the subterranean quarries where these poor serfs, in the dim torchlight and suffocating air, "laboured without reward, perished without pity, and suffered without redress." The sad narrative reveals to us, and modern research confirms, that the purple of Solomon had a very seamy side, and that an abyss of misery heaved and moaned under the glittering surface of his splendour.[2] Jerusalem during the twenty years occupied by his building must have presented the disastrous spectacle of task-masters, armed with rods and scourges,

[1] Ewald thinks that it was only "at the beginning" that Solomon, like Sesostris (Diod. Sic., *Hist.*, i. 56), could boast that his work was done without exacting bitter labour from his own countrymen. But 1 Kings ix. 22 shows that the king's opinion on this subject differed widely from that of his people (1 Kings xi. 28, xii. 3); for we are told that he did not make *servants* of the children of Israel, but used them as military officers (*Sarim*) and chariot-warriors (*Shalishim*, τριστάται) and knights. It required a little euphemism to gild the real state of affairs. The details of numbers in the Books of Chronicles differ from those in the Kings.

[2] 1 Kings v. 13, ix. 22; 2 Chron. viii. 9. (Omitted in the LXX.)

enforcing the toil of gangs of slaves, as we see them represented on the tombs of Egypt and the palaces of Assyria. The sequel shows the jealousies and discontents even of the native Israelites, who felt themselves to be "scourged with whips and laden with heavy burdens." They were bondmen in all but name, for purposes which bore very little on their own welfare. But the curses of the wretched aborigines must have been deeper, if not so loud. They were torn from such homes as the despotism of conquest still left to them, and were forced to hopeless and unrewarded toil for the alien worship and hateful palaces of their masters. Five centuries later we find a pitiable trace of their existence in the 392 *Hierodouloi*, menials lower even than the enslaved *Nethinim*, who are called "*sons of the slaves of Solomon*"—the dwindling and miserable remnant of that vast levy of Palestinian serfs.

Apart from the lavish costliness of its materials the actual Temple was architecturally a poor and commonplace structure. It was quite small—only 90 feet long, 35 feet broad, and 45 feet high. It was meant for the symbolic habitation of God, not for the worship of great congregations. It only represented the nascent art and limited resources of a tenth-rate kingdom, and was totally devoid alike of the pure and stately beauty of the Parthenon and the awe-inspiring grandeur of the great Egyptian temples with their avenues of obelisks and sphinxes and their colossal statues of deities and kings

"Staring right on with calm, eternal eyes."

When Justinian boastfully exclaimed, as he looked at his church, "*I have vanquished thee, O Solomon,*"[1] and

[1] In token of this defeat of Solomon he was represented in a statue outside the church leaning his hand on his cheek with a gesture of sorrow.

when the Khalif Omar, pointing to the Dome of the Rock, murmured, "*Behold, a greater than Solomon is here*," they forgot the vast differences between them and the Jewish king in the epoch at which they lived and the resources which they could command. The Temple was built in "majestic silence."

> "No workman's axe, no ponderous hammer rung.
> Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung."

This was due to religious reverence. It could be easily accomplished, because each stone and beam was carefully prepared to be fitted in its exact place before it was carried up the Temple hill.

The elaborate particulars furnished us of the measurements of Solomon's Temple are too late in age, too divergent in particulars, too loosely strung together, too much mingled with later reminiscences, and altogether too architecturally insufficient, to enable us to re-construct the exact building, or even to form more than a vague conception of its external appearance. Both in Kings and Chronicles the notices, as Keil says, are "incomplete extracts made independently of one another," and vague in essential details. Critics and architects have attempted to reproduce the Temple on Greek,[1] Egyptian,[2] and Phœnician[3] models, so entirely unlike each other as to show that we can arrive at no certainty.[4] It is, however, most probable that, alike

[1] Professor Williams, *Prolus. Architectonicæ.*

[2] Professor Hoskins (*Enc. Brit.*); Canina, *Jewish Antiquities*; Thrupp, *Ancient Jerusalem*; Count de Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem.*

[3] Fergusson, *Temples of the Jews*; E. Robbins, *Temple of Solomon.*

[4] Eupolemos (Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, ix. 30) and Alex. Polyhistor (Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, i. 21) idly talk of help furnished to Solomon in building the Temple by an Egyptian King Vaphres, and of letters interchanged between them. Vaphres seems to be a mere anachronism for Hophra.

in ornamentation and conception, the building was predominantly Phœnician.[1] Severe in outline, gorgeous in detail, it was more like the Temple of Venus-Astarte at Paphos than any other. Fortunately the details, apart from such dim symbolism as we may detect in them, have no religious importance, but only an historic and antiquarian interest.[2]

The Temple—called *Baith* (בַּיִת) or *Hêkâl* (הֵיכָל)—was surrounded by the thickly clustered houses of the Levites, and by porticoes[3] through which the precincts were entered by numerous gates of wood overlaid with brass. A grove of olives, palms, cedars, and cypresses, the home of many birds, probably adorned the outer court.[4] This court was shut from the "higher court,"[5] afterwards known as "the Court of the Priests," by a partition of three rows of hewn stones surmounted by a cornice of cedar beams. In the higher court, which was reached by a flight of steps, was the vast new altar of brass, 15 feet high and 30 feet long, of which the hollow was filled with earth and stones, and of

[1] The Phœnician style may, however, have been borrowed in part from Egypt.

[2] I have spoken of the Temple in *Solomon and his Times* (Men of the Bible), and have there furnished some illustrations. The following special authorities may be referred to. Stade, i. 311-57, Friederich, *Tempel und Palast Salomo's* (Innsbruck, 1887); Chipiez et Perrot, *Le Temple de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1889); Warren, *Underground Jerusalem*; Wilson and Warren, *Recov. of Jerusalem* (1871).

[3] *Parbarim* (2 Kings xxiii. 11). Comp. 1 Chron. xxvi. 18 (A.V., "suburbs"; R.V., "precincts" and "Parbar"). Descriptions of the Temple, imperfect, and not always accordant with each other, are found in 1 Kings v.-vii.; 2 Chron. ii.-v.; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. iii. 7, 8.

[4] As we infer from Psalms lii. 8, lxxxiv. 3, lxxvi. 2 (where "tabernacle" should be "covert"). Eupolemos (*ap.* Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, etc.). Scattered passages of the Talmud which refer mainly to Herod's Temple are full of extravagances.

[5] Jer. xxxvi. 10.

which the blazing sacrifices were visible in the court below.[1] Here also stood the huge molten sea, borne on the backs of twelve brazen oxen, of which three faced to each quarter of the heavens.[2] It was in the form of a lotus blossom, and its rim was hung with three hundred wild gourds in bronze, cast in two rows. Its reservoir of eight hundred and eighty gallons of water was for the priestly ablutions necessary in the butcheries of sacrifice, and its usefulness was supplemented by ten brazen caldrons on wheels, five on each side, adorned like "the sea," with pensile garlands and cherubic emblems.[3] Whether "the brazen serpent of the wilderness," to which the children of Israel burnt incense down to the days of Hezekiah, was in that court or in the Temple we do not know.

On the western side of this court, facing the rising sun, stood the Temple itself, on a platform elevated some sixteen feet from the ground. Its side chambers were "lean-to" annexes (Heb., ribs; LXX., *μέλαθρα*; Vulg., *tabulata*), in three stories, all accessible by one central entrance on the outside. Their beams rested on rebatements in the thickness of the wall, and the highest was the broadest. Above these were windows "skewed and closed," as the margin of the A.V.

[1] 2 Chron. iv. 1. This could not have been the brazen altar of the wilderness, the fate of which we do not know. It was far larger, but probably on the same model, except that steps were forbidden as an approach to the altar of the Tabernacle (Exod. xx. 24-26). It is difficult to reconcile the description of the brazen altar with the distinct prohibition of that passage. Comp. Ezek. xliii. 17.

[2] The huge stone vase of Amathus was borne on a bull (Duncker, ii. 184). Josephus says that in making these oxen Solomon broke the law (*Antt.*, VIII. vii. 5), as well as by the lions on his throne. The Romans called huge vases *lacus*.

[3] The descriptions of these lavers, whether in the Hebrew, the LXX., or Josephus, are not intelligible, and are wholly unimportant.

says; or "broad within and narrow without"; or, as it should rather be rendered, "with closed cross-beams," that is, with immovable lattices, which could not be opened and shut, but which allowed the escape of the smoke of lamps and the fumes of incense. These chambers must also have had windows. They were used to store the garments of the priests and other necessary paraphernalia of the Temple service, but as to all details we are left completely in the dark.

Of the external aspect of the building in Solomon's day we know nothing. We cannot even tell whether it had one level roof, or whether the Holy of Holies was like a lower chancel at the end of it; nor whether the roof was flat or, as the Rabbis say, ridged; nor whether the outer surface of the three-storeyed chambers which surrounded it was of stone, or planked with cedar, or overlaid with plinths of gold and silver;[1] nor whether, in any case, it was ornamented with carvings or left blank; nor whether the cornices only were decorated with open flowers like the Assyrian rosettes. Nor do we know with certainty whether it was supported within by pillars[2] or not. In the state of the records as they have come down to us, all accurate or intelligible descriptions are slurred over by compilers who had no technical knowledge and whose main desire was to impress their countrymen with the truth that the holy building was—as indeed for its day it was—"exceeding magnifical of fame and of glory throughout all countries."

[1] Like the palace of Ecbatana (Polyb., x. 27, 10; Herod., i. 98), and possibly the upper stories of the great temple of Bel at Birs-Nimrud (Borsippa).

[2] In 1 Kings x. 12 "pillars" should be "a rail" or "balustrade." Heb., מְסִלָּה; LXX., ὑποστηρίγματα; Vulg., *fulcra*.

In front of or just within the porch were two superb pillars, regarded as miracles of Tyrian art, made of fluted bronze, 27 feet high and 18 feet thick. Their capitals of 7½ feet in height resembled an open lotos blossom, surrounded by double wreaths of two hundred pensile bronze pomegranates, supporting an abacus, carved with conventional lily work. Both pomegranates and lilies had a symbolic meaning.[1] The pillars were, for unknown reasons, called Jachin and Boaz.[2] Much about them is obscure. It is not even known whether they stood detached like obelisks, or formed Propylæa; or supported the architraves of the porch itself, or were a sort of gateway, surmounted by a *melathron* with two *epithemas*, like a Japanese or Indian *toran*.

The porch (*Olam*), which was of the same height as the house (*i.e.*, 45 feet high),[3] was hung with the gilded shields of Hadadezer's soldiers which David had taken in battle,[4] and perhaps also with consecrated armour, like the sword of Goliath,[5] to show that "unto the Lord

[1] Lilies symbolised beauty and innocence; pomegranates good works (so the Chaldee in Cant. iv. 13, vi. 11, Bähr, *Symbol.*, ii. 122). Raphael crowns his Theology with pomegranates, Giotto places a pomegranate in the hand of his youthful Dante, and Giovanni Bellini in the hand of the Virgin Mary.

[2] Some suppose that the words imply "He will establish" (Jachin) "in strength" (Boaz). "After some favourite persons of the time, perhaps young sons of Solomon," says Ewald, very improbably. LXX. (2 Chron. iii. 17), Κατόρθωσις and Ἰσχύς. See a description of these pillars in Jer. lii. 21-23.

[3] Some writers have supplied the Temple with a porch 180 feet high, misled by the astounding method of the chronicler of adding the four sides into the total. Thus, he tells us that the wings of the cherubim were 30 feet long, meaning that each single wing was 7½ feet long (2 Chron. iii. 11). Josephus does the same in telling us the height of the Temple wall.

[4] The ground plans of most ancient temples were alike.

[5] 2 Sam. viii. 7; 1 Chron. xviii. 7.

belongeth our shield" (Psalm lxxxix. 18), and that "the shields of the earth belong unto God" (Psalm xlvii. 9).

A door of cypress wood, of two leaves, made in four squares, 7½ feet broad and high, turning on golden hinges overlaid with gold, and carved with palm branches and festoons of lilies and pomegranates, opened from the porch into the main apartment. This was the *Mikdash* (מִקְדָּשׁ), Holy Place, or Sanctuary, and sometimes specially called in Chaldee "the Palace" (*Hêkâl*, or *Bîrah*) (Ezra v. 14, 15, etc.). Before it, as in the Tabernacle, hung an embroidered curtain (*Māsak*). It was probably supported by four pillars on each side. In the interspaces were five tables on each side, overlaid with gold, and each encircled by a wreath of gold (*zêr*). On these were placed the cakes of shewbread.[1] At the end of the chamber, on each side the door of the Holiest, were five golden candlesticks with chains of wreathed gold hanging between them. In the centre of the room stood the golden altar of incense, and somewhere (we must suppose) the golden candlestick of the Tabernacle, with its seven branches ornamented with lilies, pomegranates, and calices of almond flowers. Nothing which was in the darkness of the Holiest was visible except the projecting golden staves with which the Ark had been carried to its place. The Holy Place itself was lighted by narrow slits.

The entrance to the Holiest, the *Debir*, or oracle,[2]

[1] So 2 Chron. iv. 8. But it would seem from 1 Kings vii. 48; 2 Chron. xiii. 11, xxix. 18 that only one table and one candlestick were ordinarily used.

[2] St. Jerome rendered *debir* by *oraculum*, but some derive it from the Arabic root *dabar*, "to be behind," not from דָּבַר, "to speak" (Munk, p. 290).

which corresponded to the Greek *adytum*, was through a two-leaved door of olive wood, 6 feet high and broad, overlaid with gold, and carved with palms, cherubim, and open flowers. The partition was of cedar wood. The floor of the whole house was of cedar overlaid with gold. The interior of this "Oracle," as it was called—for the title "Holy of Holies" is of later origin—was, at any rate in the later Temples, concealed by an embroidered veil of blue, purple, and crimson, looped up with golden chains.

The Oracle, like the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, was a perfect cube, 30 feet broad and long and high, covered with gold, but shrouded in perpetual and unbroken darkness.[1] No light was ever visible in it save such as was shed by the crimson gleam of the thurible of incense which the high priest carried into it once a year on the Great Day of Atonement.[2] In the centre of the floor must apparently have risen the mass of rock which is still visible in the Mosque of Omar, from which it is called *Al Sakhra*, "the Dome of the Rock." Tradition pointed to it as the spot on which Abraham had laid for sacrifice the body of his son Isaac, when the angel restrained the descending knife.

[1] In Zerubbabel's and Herod's Temples there was a curtain (*Parocheth*) before the Holiest; but we read of no such curtain in Solomon's, except in 2 Chron. iii. 14. The fact that the staves of the Ark were *visible* seems to show that there was not one. The chronicler speaks of "*the* vail" (2 Chron. iii. 14), showing, apparently, that there was only one; and does not mention the *Māsak*, which hung between the Porch and the Holy Place. Except in 2 Chron. iii. 14, the only mention of either is in the "Priestly Code." Since the Oracle had a door, one hardly sees why there should also have been a curtain. But the whole subject is obscure, and perhaps the chronicler is sometimes thinking of the second Temple.

[2] We read nothing, however, of any observance of the Day of Atonement till centuries later.

It was also the site of Araunah's threshing-floor, and had been therefore hallowed by two angelic apparitions.[1] On it was deposited with solemn ceremony the awful palladium of the Ark, which had been preserved through the wanderings and wars of the Exodus and the troublous days of the Judges.[2] It contained the most sacred possession of the nation, the most priceless treasure which Israel guarded for the world. This treasure was the Two Tables of the Ten Commandments, graven (in the anthropomorphic language of the ancient record) by the actual finger of God; the tables which Moses had shattered on the rocks of Mount Sinai as he descended to the backsliding people.[3] The Ark was covered with its old "Propitiatory," or "Mercy-seat," overshadowed by the wings of two small cherubim; but Solomon had prepared for its reception a new and far more magnificent covering, in the form of two colossal cherubim, 15 feet high, of which each expanded wing was 7½ feet long. These wings touched the outer walls of the Oracle, and also touched each other over the centre of the Ark.

Such was the Temple.

It was the "forum, fortress, university, and sanctuary"

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[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 25 (LXX.); 1 Chron. xxii. 1; 2 Chron. iii. 1; Josephus, *Antt.*, I. xiii. 1, VII. xiii. 4; Targum of Onkelos on Gen. xii.

[2] "The Ark of the Lord," or "of the Testimony," or "of the Covenant," was an oblong chest of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, surmounted by a border of gold, and resting on four feet, to which (A.V. corners) were attached golden rings.

[3] 1 Kings viii. 9. The pot of manna and the budded rod of Aaron were placed before it (Exod. xvi. 34; Numb. xvii. 10), and the Book of the Law beside it (Deut. xxxi. 26). The Mercy-seat above was more sacred than the Ark itself (Lev. xvi. 2). It was the cover (*Kapporeth*, ἐπίθεμα) of the Ark, and was partly formed of two winged cherubim which gazed down upon it and faced each other.

of the Jews, and the transitory emblem of the Church of Christ's kingdom. It was destined to occupy a large share in the memory, and even in the religious development, of the world, because it became the central point round which crystallised the entire history of the Chosen People. The kings of Judah are henceforth estimated with almost exclusive reference to the relation in which they stood to the centralised worship of Jehovah. The Spanish kings who built and decorated the Escurial caught the spirit of Jewish annals when, in the Court of the Kings, they reared the six colossal statues of David the originator, of Solomon the founder, of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Manasseh the restorers or purifiers of the Temple worship.[1]

It required the toil of 300,000 men for twenty years to build one of the pyramids. It took two hundred years to build and four hundred to embellish the great Temple of Artemis of the Ephesians. It took more than five centuries to give to Westminster Abbey its present form. Solomon's Temple only took seven and a half years to build; but, as we shall see, its objects were wholly different from those of the great shrines which we have mentioned. The wealth lavished upon it was such that its dishes, bowls, cups, even its snuffers and snuffer trays, and its meanest utensils, were of pure gold. The massiveness of its substructions, the splendour of its materials, the artistic skill displayed by the Tyrian workmen in all its details and adornments, added to the awful sense of its indwelling Deity, gave it an imperishable fame. Needing but little repair, it stood for more than four centuries. Succeeded as it was by the Temples of

[1] Stanley, ii. 203.

Zerubbabel and of Herod, it carried down till seventy years after the Christian era the memory of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, of which it preserved the general outline, though it exactly doubled all the proportions and admitted many innovations.[1]

The dedication ceremony was carried out with the utmost pomp. It required nearly a year to complete the necessary preparations, and the ceremony with its feasts occupied fourteen days, which were partly coincident with the autumn Feast of Tabernacles.[2]

The dedication falls into three great acts. The first was the removal of the Ark to its new home (1 Kings viii. 1-11); then followed the speech and the prayer of Solomon (vv. 12-61); and, finally, the great holocaust was offered (vv. 62-66).

The old Tabernacle, or what remained of it, with its precious heirlooms, was carried by priests and Levites from the high place at Gibeon, which was henceforth abandoned.[3] This procession was met by another, far more numerous and splendid, consisting of all the

[1] The Tyrian adornments; the steps to the altar; the ten candlesticks, and tables; the lions and oxen.

[2] The Temple was finished in the eighth month of Solomon's eleventh year, and dedicated in the seventh month (*Ethanim*, or Tisri) of the twelfth year. The first eight days (8th to 15th) were devoted to the Feast of Dedication, and then from the 15th to the 22nd they kept the Feast of Tabernacles. On the 23rd (the eighth day from the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles, called *'atsereth*, 2 Chron. 10) Solomon dismissed the people. The עֲצֶרֶת "solemn assembly," is not mentioned in Exodus or Deuteronomy, but in Lev. xxiii. 36.

[3] It was perhaps stored away in one of the Temple chambers (2 Macc. ii. 4). The Gibeonites (*Neihinim*) were at the same time transferred to Jerusalem. The chronicler (2 Chron. v. 6) says that *the Levites* took the Ark, according to the Levitic rule; but 1 Kings viii. 3 says that *the priests* bore it, as in Deut. xxxi. 9, and in all the præ-exilic histories (Josh. iii. 3, vi. 6; 2 Sam. xv. 24-29, etc.). W. Robertson Smith, p. 144.

princes, nobles, and captains, which brought the Ark from the tent erected for it on Mount Zion by David forty years before.

The Israelites had flocked to Jerusalem in countless multitudes, under their sheykhs and emîrs[1] from the border of Hamath on the Orontes,[2] north of Mount Lebanon, to the Wady el-Areesh.[3] The king, in his most regal state, accompanied the procession, and the Ark passed through myriads of worshippers crowded in the outer court, from the tent on Mount Zion into the darkness of the Oracle on Mount Moriah, where it continued, unseen perhaps by any human eye but that of the high priest once a year, until it was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon.[4] To indicate that this was to be its rest for ever, the staves, contrary to the old law, were drawn out of the golden rings through which they ran, in order that no human hand might touch the sacred emblem itself when it was borne on the shoulders of the Levitic priests. "And there they are unto this day," writes the compiler from his ancient record, long after Temple and Ark had ceased to exist.[5]

[1] The sheykhs are heads of clans; the emîrs of tribes (Reuss, i. 444).

[2] The Greek Ἐπιφάνεια. Solomon seems to have had some jurisdiction there (2 Chron. viii. 6).

[3] The torrent (*nachal*) of Egypt.

[4] The Holiest, being an unlighted cube, must always have been dim; but, as we have seen, we have no proof that in Solomon's Temple the entrance to it was shrouded by a curtain. In 1 Kings viii. 12, for "The Lord said that He would dwell *in the thick darkness*," the Targum had "*In Jerusalem.*"

[5] In 1 Kings viii. 4 we read that "the priests and the Levites" brought up to Jerusalem "the Tabernacle of the congregation." But the LXX. only has οἱ ἱερεῖς. In 2 Chron. v. 5 the Hebrew text has "the Levites" in some MSS., or "the priests, the Levites"—*i.e.*, the

The king is the one predominant figure, and the high priest is not once mentioned. Nathan is only mentioned by the heathen historian Eupolemos. Visible to the whole vast multitude, Solomon stood in the inner court on a high scaffolding of brass. Then came a burst of music and psalmody from the priests and musicians, robed in white robes, who densely thronged the steps of the great altar.[1] They held in their hands their glittering harps and cymbals, and psalteries in their precious frames of red sandal wood, and twelve of their number rent the air with the blast of their silver trumpets as Solomon, in this supreme hour of his prosperity, shone forth before his people in all his manly beauty.

At the sight of that stately figure in its gorgeous robes the song of praise was swelled by innumerable voices, and, to crown all, a blaze of sudden glory wrapped the Temple and the whole scene in heaven's own splendour (2 Chron. v. 13, 14). First, the king, standing with his back to the people, broke out into a few words of prophetic song. Then, turning to the multitude, he blessed them—he, and not the high priest—and briefly told them the history and significance of this house of God, warning them faithfully that the Temple after all was but the *emblem* of God's presence in the midst of

Levitic priests. For "the priests took up the ark" (1 Kings viii. 3) the chronicler has "the Levites" (comp. Numb. iii. 31, iv. 15). It is at least doubtful whether the distinction between priests and Levites is older than the Priestly Code and the days of Ezekiel. Also, the LXX. in 1 Kings viii. 4 puts "witness" for "congregation," and some critics maintain that "congregation" (*'edah*) is post-exilic. (See Robertson Smith, *Enc. Brit.*, s.v. Kings). See *infra*, pp. 189, 190.

[1] Some psalm, like Psalm cxxxvi., was probably sung by alternate choirs, but hardly in the attitude of prostration which followed the sudden blaze of glory (2 Chron. vii. 3).

them, and that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything. After this he advanced to the altar, and kneeling on his knees (2 Chron. vi. 13)—a most unusual attitude among the Jews, who, down to the latest ages, usually stood up to pray—he prayed with the palms of his hands upturned to heaven, as though to receive in deep humility its out-poured benefits. The prayer, as here given, consists of an introduction, seven petitions, and a conclusion. It was a passionate entreaty that God would hear, both individually and nationally, both in prosperity and in adversity, the supplications of His people, and even of strangers, who should either pray in the courts of that His house, or should make it the *Kibleh* of their devotions.[1]

After the dedicatory prayer both the outer and the inner court of the Temple reeked and swam with the blood of countless victims—victims so numerous that the great brazen altar became wholly insufficient for

[1] "The prayer" is of extreme beauty, but it belongs by its ideas to the seventh and not to the eleventh or tenth centuries B.C. (Ewald). It is probably added by a later editor who took the Deuteronomic standpoint. It is found, sometimes almost word for word, in Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii.; but there are many variations between the Hebrew and the LXX., and Kings and Chronicles. Looking only at actual facts, not at *a priori* theories, we see that, as Professor Driver says (*Contemporary Review*, Feb. 1890), "the Hebrew historians used some freedom in attributing speeches to historical characters." Thus, both the syntax and vocabulary, to say nothing of the thoughts of various speeches attributed to David by the chronicler, are sometimes such as mark the latest period in the history of the language, and are often quite without precedent in præ-exilic literature. Some feelings which gathered round the Temple find expression in Psalms xxiv., xxvii., xlii., lxxii., lxxxiv., cxxii., and in more extravagant and less spiritual forms throughout the Talmud. *Soteh*, f. 48; *Berachoth*, f. 591; *Moed Qaton*, t. 261, etc.

them.[1] At the close of the entire festival they departed to their homes with joy and gladness.[2]

But whatever the Temple might or might not be to the people, the king used it as his own chapel. Three times a year, we are told, he offered—and for all that appears, offered with his own hand without the intervention of any priest—burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar. Not only this, but he actually "burnt incense therewith upon the altar which was before the Lord,"—the very thing which was regarded as so deadly a crime in the case of King Uzziah.[3] Throughout the history of the monarchy, the priests, with scarcely any exception, seem to have been passive tools in the hands of the kings. Even under Rehoboam —much more under Ahaz and Manasseh—the sacred precincts were defiled with nameless abominations, to which, so far as we know, the priests offered no resistance

[1] The Khalif Moktader sacrificed at Mecca 40,000 camels and 50,000 sheep (Burton's *Pilgrimage*, i. 318). Solomon offered burnt offerings (*oloth*) and thank offerings (*shelamim*). No mention is made of sin offerings; and it may be doubted whether they had any separate existence till the days of the Exile.

[2] 1 Kings viii. 66, "went unto their *tents*," is a reminiscence of earlier days. The chronicler (1) extends the feast to fourteen days, according to which there is an interpolation, "and seven days, even fourteen days," in verse 65; (2) he says that the sacrifices were consumed by fire from heaven.

[3] 1 Kings ix. 25. The Hebrew text seems to have been tampered with, and the allusions significantly disappear from 2 Chron. viii. 12, 13. The commentators assiduously try to clear away the difficulty.

CHAPTER XV.

THE IDEAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE.

1 KINGS vii. 13—51, viii. 12—61.

"The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv. 21, 23.

FIVE long chapters of the First Book of Kings are devoted to the description of Solomon's Temple, which occupies a still larger space in the Books of Chronicles. The Temple was regarded as the permanent form of the ancient Tabernacle, which is described with lengthy and minute detail in Exodus. It might seem, therefore, that there must be some clear explanation of the idea which this sacred building was intended to embody. Yet it is by no means easy to ascertain what this idea was, and those who have deeply studied the question have in age after age been led to widely different views.

1. Philo and Josephus,[2] with certain variations of detail, regard it as a symbol of the universe—the world of idea and the world of sense. Thus the seven-

[1] The scepticism of modern critics, who doubt whether there ever was a Tabernacle in the wilderness at all, seems to be insufficiently grounded.

[2] *Vit. Mos.*, iii.; *Antt.*, III. vi. 4, vii. 7; *B. J.*, VII. v. 5.

branched candlestick represents the seven planets; the twelve cakes of shewbread are the twelve signs of the Zodiac; the court is the earth; the sanctuary the sea; and the oracle the heavens. The theory derives no importance from its authorship. Neither Philo nor Josephus, nor the Rabbis, nor the Fathers who adopted their views,[1] have the least authority in such matters; and Philo, who led the way in mystical interpretation, abounds in fantasies which are ludicrously impossible, and are now universally rejected.

2. The Talmudists held that the Tabernacle was the exact copy of one in heaven,[2] and that its services reflected those of the heavenly hierarchy. This view went into the extreme of literalism, as the other did into the extreme of spiritualisation. It was based on the text, "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount."[3] The Book of Chronicles goes so far in this direction as to say that David received from Jehovah the exact pattern of the Temple down to its minutest details, together with the entire priestly and Levitic organisation of its services. "All this," says David to Solomon, "the Lord made me to understand *in writing*, by His hand upon me, even all the works in the pattern."

3. Christian writers have seen in the Temple an emblem of the visible, the invisible, and the triumphant Church. Such symbolic interpretation depends on the most arbitrary combinations, and does not rise higher

[1] *E.g.*, Origen (*Hom.*, ix.), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, v.), Theodoret (*Qu.*, xl. *in Exod.*), Jerome (*Ep.*, lxiv.), and others. See Kalisch, *Exodus*, p. 495.

[2] Wisdom ix. 8: "A copy of the holy tabernacle which Thou didst prepare from the beginning."

[3] Exod. xxv. 40, xxvi. 30; Acts vii. 44; Heb. viii. 5.

than an exercise of fancy. It has not the smallest exegetic importance.

4. Luther thought that the Tabernacle and Temple were emblems of human nature:—the court, the sanctuary, and the oracle corresponding to the body, the soul, and the spirit. Later writers have pushed this opinion, already sufficiently baseless, into the absurdest detail.

5. The much simpler view of Maimonides[1] who is followed by our learned Spencer, is that the Temple was simply the palace of Jehovah, with its vestibule, its audience hall, its Presence-chamber, its attendant courtiers, its throne, and its offerings of food and wine and sacrifice. The simplicity of this conception seems to be in accordance with what we know of ancient forms of worship, and it is certain that in many heathen temples the offerings of food and wine were supposed to be consumed by the god. The name "palace" is, however, only given to the Temple in one chapter (1 Chron. xxix. 1, 19); and the Hebrew, or rather the Persian,[2] word so rendered (*bîrah*) may also be rendered "fortress."

6. In truth we cannot be sure that the idea of the Temple remained single and definite through so many ages. It was probably a composite and varying emblem, of which the original significance had become mingled with many later elements. It is, however, certain that many numbers and details were symbolical, and there

[1] *More Nebochim*, iii. 45-49; Kalisch, *Exodus*, p. 497.

[2] The three names given to the Tabernacle are *Ohel* ("tent"), *Mishkan* ("tabernacle," "habitation," or "dwelling-place"), and *Baith* ("house"). It is undoubted that the Tabernacle followed the ordinary construction of the Oriental tent, with its two divisions, of which the interior could not be entered by strangers.

was a deep insight and magnificent completeness in the manner in which certain truths were shadowed forth by its construction and its central service.

The book in which its symbolism is most thoroughly worked out is Bähr's *Symbolik.* He elaborates, in a simpler form, the opinion of Philo, that the Temple represented "the structure which God has erected, the house in which God lives." So far the fact cannot be disputed for, in Exod. xxix. 45 we are told that the Tabernacle is called the "House of God" because "I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God." But Bähr takes a great leap when he proceeds to explain the house of God as "the creation of heaven and earth." If his views were true *as a whole,* it would indeed be strange that they are not indicated in a single passage either of the Old or New Testaments.

The Tabernacle was called "the Tabernacle of the Testimony" because its two tables of stone were a witness of the covenant between God and man. It was also called "the Tabernacle of Meeting," by which is not meant the place where Israel assembled, but the place where God met Moses and the children of Israel.[1] "For there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat," says Jehovah to Moses;[2] and "at the entrance of the tent of meeting I will meet with you to speak there unto thee, and there I will meet with the children of Israel."[3] Thus,

[1] Numb. xvii. 7, xviii. 2; 2 Chron. xxiv. 6; Acts vii. 44; Exod. xxix. 10, etc.; 1 Kings viii. 4; 2 Chron. viii. 13. The phrase "Tent of Meeting" in the R.V. removes the complete obscuring of the meaning involved by the A.V. rendering of "Tabernacle of the Congregation."

[2] Exod. xxv. 22.

[3] Exod. xxix. 42, 43.

in its broadest idea, the Temple brought before the soul of every thoughtful Israelite the three great beliefs, (1) that God deigned to dwell in the midst of His people; (2) that, in His infinite mercy and condescension, He admitted a reciprocity between Himself and His human children; and (3) that the most absolute expression of His will was the moral law, obedience to which was the condition of heavenly favour and earthly happiness.

"In the Porch," says Bishop Hall, "we may see the regenerate soul entering into the blessed society of the Church; in the Holy Place we may see a figure of the Communion of the true visible Church on earth; in the Holy of Holies the glories of Heaven opened to us by our true High Priest Christ Jesus, who entered once for all to make an Atonement betwixt God and man."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARK AND THE CHERUBIM.

1 KINGS vi. 23—30, viii. 6—11.

"Jehovah, thundering out of Sion, throned
Between the cherubim."

MILTON.

THE inculcation of truths so deep as the unity, the presence, and the mercy of God would alone have sufficed to give preciousness to the national sanctuary, and to justify the lavish expenditure with which it was carried to completion. But as in the Tabernacle, so in the Temple, which was only a more rich and permanent structure, the numbers, the colours, and many details had a real significance. The unity of the Temple shadowed forth the unity of the Godhead; while the concrete and perfect unity, resulting from the reconciliation of unity with difference and opposition (1 + 2), is "the signature of the Deity." Hence, as in our English cathedrals, three was the predominant number. There were three divisions,—Porch, Holy Place, Oracle. Each main division contained three expiatory objects. Three times its width (which was 3 × 10) was the measure of its length. The number ten is also prominent in the measurements. It includes all the cardinal numbers, and, as the completion of multiplicity, is used to indicate a perfect whole. The

seven pillars which supported the house, and the seven branches of the candlestick, recalled the sacredness of the seventh day hallowed by the Sabbath, by circumcision, and by the Passover. The number of the cakes of shewbread was twelve, "the signature of the people of Israel, a whole in the midst of which God resides, a body which moves after Divine laws." Of the colours predominant in the Temple, *blue*, the colour of heaven, symbolises revelation; *white* is the colour of light and innocence; *purple*, of majesty and royal power; *crimson*, of life, being the colour of fire and blood. Every gem on the high priest's pectoral had its mystic significance, and the bells and pomegranates which fringed the edge of his ephod were emblems of devotion and good works.

Two instances will suffice to indicate how deep and rich was the significance of the truths which Moses had endeavoured to engraft in the minds of his people, and to which Solomon, whether with full consciousness or not, gave permanence in the Temple.

1. Consider, first, *the Ark.*

Every step towards the Holiest was a step of deepening reverence. The Holy Land was sacred, but Jerusalem was more sacred than all the rest. The Temple was the most sacred part of the city; the Oracle was the most sacred part of the Temple; the Ark was the most sacred thing in the Oracle; yet the Ark was only sacred because of that which it contained.

And what did it contain? What was it which enshrined in itself this quintessence of all sanctitude? When we pierce to the inmost recesses of a pyramid, we find there only the ashes of a dead man, or even of an animal. Within the adytum of an Egyptian temple we might have found "an ox wallowing on purple tapestry." The Egyptians, too, had their arks,

as the Greeks had the cyst of Cybele, and the *vannus* of Iacchus. What did *they* contain? At the best phallic emblems, the emblems of prolific nature. But the Ark of Jehovah contained nothing but the stone tablets on which were carved the Ten Words of the Covenant, the briefest possible form of the moral law of God. In the inmost heart of the Temple was its most inestimable treasure,—a protest against all idolatry; a protest against all polytheism, or ditheism, or atheism; a protest, too, against the formalism which the Temple itself and its services might tend to produce in its least spiritually minded worshippers. Thus the entire Temple was a glorification of the truth that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and that the one end to be produced by the fear of the Lord is obedience to His commandments. The Ark and its unseen treasure taught that no religion can be of the least value which does not result in conformity with the plain moral laws:—Be obedient; be kind; be pure; be honest; be truthful; be contented; and that this obedience can only spring from faith in the one God whom all real worshippers must worship in spirit and truth.

Obvious as this lesson might seem to be, it was entirely missed by the Jews in general. The Ark, too, was degraded into a fetish, and Jeremiah says (iii. 16) of the exiles, "They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they miss it: neither shall it be made any more" (Heb.). When a symbol has been perverted into a source of materialism and superstition, it becomes not only useless but positively dangerous. No religions have fallen so absolutely dead as those which have sunk into petty formalism. The Ark, for

all its quintessential sacredness, had been suffered to fall into the hands of uncircumcised Philistines, and to be placed in their Dagon temple, to show that it was no mere idolatrous amulet. Ultimately it was carried away to Babylon, to adorn the palace of a heathen tyrant, and probably to perish by fire in his captured city. In the second Temple there was no ark. Nothing remained but the rock of Araunah's threshing-floor, on which it once had stood.

2. Consider, next, the meaning of *the Cherubim.*

(1) The infinite sanctity given to the conception of the moral law was enhanced by the introduction of these overshadowing figures. We are never told in the entire books of Scripture what was the form of these cherubim; nor is their function anywhere specially defined; nor, again, can we be at all certain of the derivation of the name. That the cherubim over the Ark were not identical with the fourfold-visaged four of Ezekiel's cherub-chariot we know, because they certainly had but one face. But we now know that among the Assyrians, Persians, Egyptians, and other nations nothing was more common than these cherubic emblems, which were introduced into their palaces and temples under the forms of winged lions, oxen, men, and eagle-headed human figures. We see also that in the Tabernacle,[1] and to a still greater extent in the Temple, a tacit exception to the stringency of the Second Commandment seems to have been made in favour of the component parts of these cherubic figures. If Solomon was aware (as he surely must have been)

[1] Kuenen's notion that the cherubim had come to the Jews through the Phœnicians from the Assyrians is quite improbable. The symbol was common throughout the East, whatever be the derivation of the word.

of the existence of the law, "*Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image*," he must either have laid stress on the words "*to thyself*," and have excused the brazen oxen which supported his great laver on the ground that they could not be turned into objects of worship, or he must have held, as Ezekiel apparently did, that the ox was the predominant form in the cherubic emblem.[1] From the Vision of Ezekiel we see that the cherubim—like the "Immortalities" (ζῶα) of the Apocalypse, which had faces of the ox, the eagle, the lion, and the man—were conceived of as "living creatures" upholding the sapphire Throne of God. They had wings, and the similitude of hands under their wings. They flashed to and fro like lightning in the midst of a great cloud, and an enfolding fire, and a rolling mass of amber-coloured flame. Of the form of this "changeable hieroglyphic" we need say no more. Perhaps originally suggested by the wreathing fires and rolling stormclouds, which were regarded as immediate signs of the Divine proximity, the cherubim came to be regarded as the genius of the created universe in its richest perfection and energy, at once revealing and shrouding the Presence of God.[2] Their eyes represent His omniscience, for "the eyes of the Lord are in every place"; their wings and straight feet represent the speed and fiery gliding of His

[1] Compare Ezek. i. 10 with x. 14, where "the face of an ox" is identical with "the face of a cherub." Perhaps this gave rise to the pagan calumnies that the Jews worshipped an ass. Josephus says (insincerely) that no man could tell or even conjecture the shape of the cherubim.

[2] Bähr, whose profound studies on symbolism command respect, says that "as standing on the highest step of created life, and uniting in themselves the most perfect created life, they are the most perfect revelation of God and the Divine" (*Symbolik*, i. 340).

omnipresence;[1] each element of their fourfold shape indicates His love, His patience, His power, His sublimity. Their wheels imply that "the dread magnificence of the unintelligent creation" is under His entire control; and, as a whole, they symbolise the dazzling beauty of the universe, alike conscious and material. They were the ideal *anima animantium*—the perfection of existence emanating from and subject to the Divine Creator whose tender mercy is over all His works. Their function, when they are first introduced in the Book of Genesis, is at once vengeful and protective; vengeful of the violated law, protective of the treasure of life.[2] They are here the Erinnyes of the Dawn, revealing and avenging the works of darkness. Their "dreadful faces and fiery arms" at the gate of Eden typify guilty awakenment, realised retribution, conscious alienation from God, the universe siding with His awakened anger.

(2) But when next they are mentioned, God says to Moses, "Thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold, and thou shalt make two cherubim of gold at the two ends of the mercy-seat." But for their presence on the mercy-seat how terrible would have been the symbolism of the Holy of Holies—God's darkness, man's crime, a broken law! It would have represented Him who hath clouds and darkness round about Him,

[1] Compare the Homeric epithet *νέποδες*, and Milton's "smooth-gliding, without step."

[2] One of the Scriptural functions of the cherubim was *to guard treasure* (Ezek. xxviii. 13-15). This conception, too, was widely diffused throughout the East:—

> "As when a Gryphon through the wilderness
> Pursues the Arimaspian, who, by stealth,
> Has from his watchful custody purloined
> The guarded gold." MILTON.

and dwelleth in darkness which no man can approach unto; and the Ark would only have treasured up, as a witness against man's apostasy, the shattered slabs of the words of Sinai.[1] But over that Ark, and its saddening because dishallowed treasure, bent once more these mystic figures, these "cherubim of glory." They bent down as though at once to protect with outspread wings, and to regard with awful contemplation, that mystic gift of a law promulgated to all nations as their moral heritage and as the revealed will of God. These are no longer cherubim of vengeance or awakened wrath, for they stand on the *Capporeth*, the "covering," or "propitiatory" of the Ark.[2] They gleamed out in the red light of the high priest's golden brazier on the one day when human foot entered the darkness in which they were shrouded; and even by him they were but dimly discerned through the ascending wreaths of fragrant incense. But he stood before them, where, on their spreading wings, the light of the Divine presence was deemed to dwell; and with the blood of expiation he sprinkled seven times the mercy-seat over which these adoring figures leaned. The wrathful cherubim of the lost Eden had driven man from a treasure which he had forfeited; but these, though they guard the ten words of a law which man had broken, were cherubim of mercy and reconciliation. Those of Eden were armed with swords of flame; those of the Temple were reddened with the blood of forgiveness. Those typified a covenant destroyed and ended; these a covenant broken yet renewed. Those

[1] I follow the Rabbis in saying that the first broken slabs were in the Ark.

[2] Like the Greek images of the gods, they were made of olive, the least corruptible kind of wood, and overlaid with the purest gold.

spoke of awakened wrath; these of covenanted mercy. Those kept men back from the Tree of Life; these guarded that which is a Tree of Life to them that love it.

Could the whole covenant of the law and the gospel have been symbolised more simply, yet with Diviner force? The Temple itself, with all its sacrifices, with all its service and ceremonial and all the gorgeous vestments of Aaron's vestry, served but to teach the infinite worth of simple righteousness. The heart of the Mosaic legislation was nothing so poor, so paltry, so material as the promotion of liturgical Levitism, and the pomp of ritual, and the organisation of priestly functions—as though these in themselves had any value in the sight of God. It lay in the lesson that "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The law of Moses—the ten words which constituted the inmost preciousness of his legislation—was, alas! a violated law. For the disobedient it had no message but the wrathful menace of death. But to show that God has not abandoned His disobedient children, but would still enable them to keep that law, and to repent for its transgression, the cherubim are there. Their presence on the propitiatory was meant to reveal the glory of the gospel. The high priest, who alone saw them on the Great Day of Israel, was a type of Him who, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but in His own blood (*i.e.*, in the glory of the life outpoured for man), entered into God's presence within the veil.

(3) In the dazzling living creatures before the throne in the Revelation of St. John, we see once more these cherubim of Eden, who, having indicated at the Fall an awful warning, and represented in the Tabernacle

a blessed hope, symbolise, in the last book of the Bible, a Divine fulfilment. They are there no longer with fiery swords, in wrathful aspect, in repellent silence; but, gracious and beautiful, they join in the new song of the redeemed multitude under the shadow of the Tree of Life, to which all have free access in that recovered Eden. In the Temple—glimmering through the rising fumes of incense, which were the type of accepted prayer, their golden plumage sprinkled with the blood of the atoning sacrifice—they became a type both of all creation, up to its most celestial beings, gazing in adoration on the will of God, and of all creation, in its groaning and travailing, restored through the precious blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Not all, of course, of these deep meanings were present to the souls of Israel's worshippers; but the best of them might with joy see something of the things which we see when we say that in these glorious figures are summed up the three chief images of all Scripture: first, the Primæval Dispensation, "*In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*"; next, in the wilderness, "*This do, and thou shalt live*"; last of all, in the Gospel Dispensation, "*Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.*"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GRADUAL GROWTH OF THE LEVITIC RITUAL

1 KINGS viii. 1—66.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."—1 SAM. xv. 22.

BEFORE we enter on the subject of the Temple worship, it is necessary to emphasise a fact which will meet us again and again in many forms as we consider the history of the Chosen People: it is the amazing ignorance which seems to have prevailed among them for centuries as to the most central and decisive elements of nearly the whole of the Mosaic law as we now read it in the Pentateuch.

1. Take, for instance, the law of a central sanctuary. It is strongly laid down, and incessantly insisted on throughout the Book of Deuteronomy.[1] Yet that law does not seem to have been so much as noticed by any of the earlier prophets or judges, or by Saul, or by David. The judges and early kings offer sacrifices at any place which they regard as sacred—Bochim, Ophrah, Mizpeh, Gilgal, Bethel, Bethlehem, etc.[2] The rule of

[1] See, especially, Deut. xii. 5-19. In the later Priestly Code the centralisation of worship is not inculcated, but supposed to be already established. In the original Book of the Covenant it is not required at all.

[2] Judg. ii. 5, vi. 24, viii. 27, xx. 1, xxi. 2, 4; 1 Sam. vii. 9, x. 8, xi. 15, xiii. 9, xvi. 5, etc.

one place for sacrifice was not regarded for a moment by the kings of the Northern Kingdom. The transgression of it was not made a subject of complaint by Elijah, Elisha, or any of the earlier prophets. Not one of the kings, even of the most pious kings—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham—rigidly enforced it until the reign of Josiah. The law seems to have remained an absolutely dead letter for hundreds of years. Now this would be amply accounted for if the Deuteronomic and Levitic Codes only belonged in reality to the days of Josiah and of the Exile; for in "the Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xxiv. 7), which is the most ancient part of these codes, and comprises Exod. xx.—xxviii. 33, and is briefly repeated in Exod. xxxiv. 10-28, there is not only no insistence on a central shrine, but many of the regulations would have been rendered impossible had such a shrine existed (*e.g.*, Exod. xxi. 6, xxii. 7, 8, where "the judges" should be "God," as in the R.V.). Indeed, so far from insistence on one Temple, we expressly read (Exod. xx. 24), "An altar of earth shalt thou make Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen, *in all places where I record My name*, and I will come unto thee and bless thee."

2. Again, the Book of Leviticus lays down a singularly developed code of ritual, "extending to the minutest details of worship and of life." Yet there is scarcely the shadow of a trace of the observance of even its most reiterated and important provisions during centuries of Israelitish history. It is emphatically a priestly book; yet from the days of David down to those of Josiah, the priests, with few exceptions, are almost ignored in the national records. They took the

colour of their opinions from the reigning kings, even in matters which were contrary to the whole extent and spirit of the Mosaic Code. Samuel, who was not a priest, nor even a Levite, performed every function of a priest, and of a high priest, all his life long.

3. Again, as we have seen, in spite of the positive distinctness of the Second Commandment, not only is the "calf-worship" established, with scarcely a protest, throughout the Northern Kingdom; but Solomon even ventures, without question or reproof, to place twelve oxen under his brazen sea, and to adorn the steps of his throne with golden lions.

4. Again, no ceremony was more awful, or more strikingly symbolical, in the later religion of Israel, than that of the Great Day of Atonement. It was the *only* appointed fast in the Jewish year,[1] a day so sacred that it acquired the name of *Yoma*, "the Day." Yet the Day of Atonement, with its arresting ceremonies and intense significance, is not so much as once mentioned outside the Levitical Code by a single prophet, or priest, or king. It is not even mentioned—which is exceedingly strange—in the post-exilic Books of Chronicles. Between the Book of Leviticus (with its supposed date of 1491 B.C.), down to the days of Philo, Josephus, and the New Testament, there is not so much as a hint of the observance of this central ceremony of the whole Levitic law! What is more perplexing is, that, in the ideal legislation of Ezekiel, where alone anything distantly resembling the Day of Atonement is alluded to (Ezek. xlv. 18-20), the time, manner, and circumstances are as absolutely different as if Ezekiel had never read the Levitic law at all.

[1] ἡ νηστεία (Acts xxvii. 9); Philo, *Lib. de Septenariis.*

How would any prophet have dared to ignore or alter, without a word of reference or apology, a rite of Divine origin and immemorial sanctity, if he had been aware of its existence?

5. Nor is this only the case with the Day of Atonement. It seems certain that at Jerusalem there was not for centuries anything distantly resembling the due Levitic observance of the three great yearly feasts. Nehemiah, for instance, tells us in so many words that since the days of Joshua the son of Nun down to B.C. 445—perhaps for a thousand years—the Feast of Tabernacles had never been observed in the most characteristic of all its appointed rites—the dwelling in booths.[1]

6. Again, although there are slight allusions in some of the Prophets to "laws" and "statutes" and "commandments," their silence about, if not their absolute ignorance of, anything which resembles the Levitic legislation as a whole is a startling problem. Thus, even a late prophet like Jeremiah alludes, without a word of reprobation, to men cutting and making themselves bald for the dead (Jer. xvi. 6; comp. xli. 5) in a way which the Levitic law (Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1) strenuously forbids.

7. Again, as is well known, there is a fundamental difference between the three codes as to the relative position of the priests and Levites. (i) In Exod. xix. 6 all Israel is regarded as "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation," and in Exod. xxiv. 5 the young men of the children of Israel "offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings." (ii) In Numb. iii. 44-51 the Levites are set aside for the service of the Tabernacle

[1] Neh. viii. 17.

in place of the firstborn. But neither in "the Book of the Covenant" nor in Deuteronomy is there any *distinction* between the services of the priests and the Levites. (iii) In Deut. x. 8 every Levite may become a priest. All priestly functions are open to the Levites, and the arrangements for the Levites are wholly different from those of Numbers. (iv) But in the Priestly Code only the sons of Aaron are to be priests (Numb. vi. 22-27, xviii. 1-7; Lev. i. 5, 8). The Levites are to minister to them in more or less menial functions, and are permitted a share in the tithes, but not (as in Deut. xviii. 1) in the firstfruits. We have first identity of priests and Levites, then partial, then absolute separation.[1] The earliest trace of this degradation of the Levites is propounded as something quite new in Ezek. xliv. 10-16, which distinctly implies (see verse 13) that up to that time the Levites had enjoyed full priestly rites.

It must be admitted that these facts are not capable of easy explanation, nor is it strange that they have led the way to unexpected conclusions. We have to face the certainty that, for ages together, the Levitic law was not only a dead letter among the people for whom it was intended, but that its very existence does not seem to have been known. "For long periods," says Professor Robertson, "the people of Israel seem to have been as ignorant of their own religion as the people of Europe were of theirs in the Dark Ages."[2]

[1] Canon Cook in the *Speaker's Commentary* (Leviticus, p. 496) admits: "It is by no means unlikely there are insertions of a later date, which were written and sanctioned by the prophets and holy men who *after the captivity* arranged and edited the Scriptures of the Old Testament."

[2] *Book by Book*, p. 7.

But the problem, were we to pursue it into its details, is far more perplexing than can be accounted for by the very partial and misleading parallel which Professor Robertson adduces. The parallel would be nearer if, throughout the Dark Ages for a thousand years together, scarcely a single trace were to be found, even under the best popes and the most pious kings, and even in theologic and sacred literature, of so much as the existence of a New Testament, or of any observance of the most distinctive festivals and sacraments of Christianity. And this, as Professor Robertson knows, is infinitely far from being the case. It is true that an argument *ex silentio* may easily be pushed too far; but we cannot ignore it when it is so striking as this, and when it is also strengthened by so many positive and corroborative facts.

A solution of this phenomenon—which becomes most salient in the Book of Kings—is proposed by the criticism which has received the title of "The Higher Criticism," because it is historic and constructive, and rises above purely verbal elements. That solution is that the Pentateuch is not only a composite structure (which all would concede), but that it was written in very different ages, and that much of it is of very late origin. Critics of the latest school believe that it consists of three well-marked and entirely different codes of laws—namely, "the Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xx. 23—xxiii.); the "Deuteronomic Code," first brought into prominence in the reign of Josiah, and written shortly before that reign; and the "Levitical" or "Priestly Code," which comprises most of Exodus, and nearly all Leviticus, and was not introduced till after the Exile. This would be indeed a radical conclusion, and cannot yet be regarded as having been conclusively

established. But so remarkable has been the rapidity with which the opinion of religious critics has advanced on the subject, that now even the strongest opponents of this extreme view admit that *the existence of the three separate codes* has been demonstrated, although they still think that all three may belong to the Mosaic age.[1] It is obvious, however, that this view leaves many of the difficulties entirely untouched. Criticism has not yet spoken her last word upon the subject, but we ought to take her views into account in considering the judgments pronounced by the historian of the Kings. They were judgments which, in their details, though not as regards broad moral principles, were based on the standpoint of a later age. The views of that later age must be discounted if we have to admit that some of the ritual innovations and legal transgressions of the kings were trangressions of laws of the very existence of which they were profoundly ignorant. That they *were* thus ignorant of them is not only implied throughout, but appears from the direct statements of the sacred historians.[2]

[1] See Professor Robertson, *Book by Book*, p. 56. I quote Professor Robertson as one of the ablest and most competent opponents of extreme conclusions; but it does not seem to me that he touches on some of the arguments which constitute the main strength of the case against him.

[2] See 2 Kings xxii. 11; Ezra ix. 1, 7; Neh. ix. 3.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TEMPLE WORSHIP.

1 KINGS viii. 1—11.

"Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these. . . . Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit."—JER. vii. 4, 8.

THE actual Temple building, apart from its spacious courts, was neither for worshippers nor for priests, neither for sacrifice nor for prayer. It existed only for symbolism and, at least in later days, for expiation. No prayer was offered in the sanctuary. The propitiatory was the symbol of expiation, but even after the introduction of the Day of Atonement the atoning blood was only carried into it once a year.

All the worship was in the outer court, and consisted mainly, (1) of praise, and (2) of offerings. Both were prominent in the Dedication Festival.

"It is written," said our Lord, "My house shall be called a House of Prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers." The quotation is from the later Isaiah, and represents a happy advance in spiritual religion. Among the details of the Levitic Tabernacle no mention is made of prayer, though it was symbolised both in the incense and in the sacrifices which have been called "unspoken prayers."[1] "*Let my prayer be set forth as*

[1] "Sacrificia symbolicæ preces" (Outram, *De Sacrif.*, p. 108).

incense," says the Psalmist, "*and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*" In the New Testament we read that "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." But during the whole history of the first Temple we only hear—and that very incidentally—of *private* prayer in the Temple. Solomon's prayer was public, and combined prayer with praises and benedictions. But no fragments of Jewish liturgies have come down to us which we can with any probability refer to the days of the kings. The Psalms which most clearly belong to the Temple service are mainly services of praise.

In the mind of the people the *sacrifices* were undoubtedly the main part of the Temple ritual. This fact was specially emphasised by the scene which marked the Festival of the Dedication.

It is difficult to imagine a scene which to our unaccustomed senses would have been more revolting than the holocausts of a great Jewish Festival like that of Solomon's Dedication. As a rule the daily sacrifices, exclusively of such as might be brought by private worshippers, were the lambs slain at morning and evening. Yet Maimonides gives us the very material and unpoetic suggestion that the incense used was to obviate the effluvium of animal sacrifice. The suggestion is unworthy of the great Rabbi's ability, and is wholly incorrect; but it reminds us of the almost terrible fact that, often and often, the Temple must have been converted into one huge and abhorrent *abattoir*, swimming with the blood of slaughtered victims, and rendered intolerably repulsive by heaps of bloody skins and masses of offal. The smell of burning flesh, the swift putrescence caused by the tropic heat, the unlovely accompaniments of swarms of flies, and ministers with

blood-drenched robes would have been inconceivably disagreeable to our Western training—for no one will believe the continuous miracle invented by the Rabbis, who declare that no fly was ever seen in the Temple, and no flesh ever grew corrupt.[1] No doubt the brazen sea and the movable caldrons were in incessant requisition, and there were provisions for vast storages of water. These could have produced a very small mitigation of the accompanying pollutions during a festival which transformed the great court of the Temple into the reeking shambles and charnel-house of sheep and oxen "which could not be told nor numbered for multitude."

Had such spectacles been frequent, we should surely have had to say of the people of Jerusalem as Sir Monier Williams says of the ancient Hindus, "The land was saturated with blood, and people became wearied and disgusted with slaughtered sacrifices and sacrificing priests."[2] What infinite, and what revolting labour, must have been involved in the right burning of "the two kidneys and the fat," and the due disposition of the "inwards" of all these holocausts! The groaning brazen altar, vast as it was, failed to meet the requirements of the service, and apparently a multitude of other altars were extemporised for the occasion.

When the festival was over God appeared to Solomon in vision, as He had done at Gibeon. So far Solomon

[1] *Yoma*, f. 21, *a*.

[2] On vast ancient holocausts, see Athen., *Deipnos.*, i. 5; Diod. Sic., xi. 72; Porph., *De abstin.*, ii. 60; Suet., *Calig.*, 14; Sen., *De Benef.*, iii. 27; Ammian. Marcel., xxii. 4, xxv. 4; and other passages collected by the diligence of commentators. See, too, Josephus (*B. J.*, VI. ix. 3) who reckons that at a passover in Nero's time 256,000 sacrifices were offered.

had not gravely or consciously deflected from the ideal of a theocratic king. Anything which had been worldly or mistaken in his policy—the oppression into which he had been led, the heathen alliances which he had formed, his crowded harem, his evident fondness for material splendour which carried with it the peril of selfish pride—were only signs of partial knowledge and human frailty. His heart was still, on the whole, right with God. He was once more assured in nightly vision that his prayer and supplication were accepted. The promise was renewed that if he would walk in integrity and uprightness his throne should be established for ever; but that if he or his children swerved into apostasy Israel should be driven into exile, and, as a warning to all lands, "this house, which I have hallowed for My name, will I cast out of My sight, and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people."

Here, then, we are brought face to face with problems which arise from the whole system of worship in the Old Dispensation. Whatever it was, to whatever extent it was really carried out and was not merely theoretical, at whatever date its separate elements originated, and however clear it is that it has utterly passed away, there must have been certain ideas underlying it which are worthy of our study.

1. Of the element of praise, supported by music, we need say but little. It is a natural mode of expressing the joy and gratitude which fill the heart of man in contemplating the manifold mercies of God. For this reason the pages of Scripture ring with religious music from the earliest to the latest age. We are told in the Chronicles that triumphant praise was largely introduced into the great festival services, and

that the Temple possessed a great organisation for vocal and orchestral music. David was not only a poet, but an inventor of musical instruments.[1] Fifteen musical instruments are mentioned in the Bible, and five of them in the Pentateuch. Most important among them are cymbals, flutes, silver trumpets, rams' horns, the harp (*Kinnor*) and the ten-stringed lute (*Nevel*).[2] The remark of Josephus that Solomon provided 40,000 harps and lutes and 200,000 silver trumpets is marked by that disease of exaggeration which seems to infect the mind of all later Jewish writers when they look back with yearning to the vanished glories of their past. There can, however, be no doubt that the orchestra was amply supplied, and that there was a very numerous and well-trained choir.[3] We read in the Psalms and elsewhere of tunes which they were trained to sing. Such tunes were "The Well," and "The Bow," and "The Gazelle of the morning," and "All my fresh springs shall be in Thee," and "Die for the son" (*Muth-labben*).[4] In the second Temple

[1] Amos vi. 5; 1 Chron. xxiii. 5.

[2] Edersheim, *The Temple and its Services*, p. 54.

[3] The chronicler says that there were 38,000 Levites, of which 24,000 were "to oversee the work of the house of the Lord; and 6000 were officers and judges, and 4000 door-keepers; and 4000 praised the Lord with the instruments which I made," *said David*, "to praise therewith."

[4] Some of these titles of the Psalms are, however, very uncertain. Gesenius thinks that this last title (Psalm ix.) means that the Psalm "was to be sung by boys with virgins' voices." It is, to say the least, a very curious coincidence, that in 1 Chron. xxv. 4 the names of the sons of Heman, Giddalti and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth," mean (omitting the strange Joshbekashah, for which the LXX. Cod. Alex. reads Σεβακαιτάν), consecutively, "I have given | great and high help: | I have spoken | visions | in abundance." Had the names any reference to tunes?

female singers were admitted;[1] in Herod's Temple Levite choir-boys took their place.[2] The singing was often antiphonal. Some of the music still used in the synagogue must date from these times, and there is no reason to doubt that in the so-called Gregorian *tones* we have preserved to us a close approximation to the ancient hymnody of the Temple. This element of ancient worship calls for no remark. It is a religious instinct to use music in the service of God; and perhaps the imagination of St. John in the Revelation, when he describes the rapture of the heavenly host pouring forth the chant "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," was coloured by reminiscences of gorgeous functions in which he had taken part on the "Mountain of the House."

2. When we proceed to speak of *the Priesthood* we are met by difficulties, to which we have already alluded, as to the date of the varying regulations respecting it. "It would be difficult," says Dr. Edersheim, "to conceive arrangements more thoroughly or consistently opposed to what are commonly called 'priestly pretensions' than those of the Old Testament."[3] According to the true ideal, Israel was to be "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation";[4] but the institution of *ministering* priests was of course a necessity, and the Jewish priesthood, which is now utterly abrogated, was, or gradually became, representative. Representatively they had to mediate between God and Israel, and typically to symbolise the "holiness," *i.e.*, the

[1] Ezra ii. 65; Neh. vii. 67; Psalm lxxxvii. 7.

[2] Of these, perhaps, were "the children" who shouted their hosannas to Jesus in the Temple (Matt. xxi. 15).

[3] *The Temple and its Services*, p. 67.

[4] Exod. xix. 5, 6.

consecration of the Chosen People. Hence they were required to be free from every bodily blemish. It was regarded as a deadly offence for any one of them to officiate without scrupulous safeguard against every ceremonial defilement, and they were specially adorned and anointed for their office. They were an extremely numerous body, and from the days of David are said to have been divided into twenty-four courses. They were assisted by an army of attendant Levites, also divided into twenty-four courses, who acted as the cleansers and keepers of the Temple. But the distinction of priests and Levites does not seem to be older than "the Priestly Code," and criticism has all but demonstrated that the sections of the Pentateuch known by that name belong, in their present form, not to the age of Moses, but to the age of the successors of Ezekiel. The elaborate priestly and Levitic arrangements ascribed to the days of Aaron by the chronicler, who wrote six hundred years after David's day, are unknown to the writers of the Book of Kings.

In daily life they wore no distinctive dress. In the Temple service, all the year round, their vestments were of the simplest. They were of white *byssus* to typify innocence,[1] and four in number to indicate completeness. They consisted of a turban, breeches, and seamless coat of white linen, together with a girdle, symbolic of zeal and activity, which was assumed during actual ministrations.[2] The only magnificent vestments were those worn for a few hours by the high priest once a year on the Great Day of Atonement. These "golden vestments" were eight in number. To the ordinary robes were added the robe of the ephod (*Meil*)

[1] Rev. xv. 6. [2] Comp. Rev. i. 13, xv 6.

of dark blue, with seventy-two golden bells, and pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet; a jewelled pectoral containing the Urim and Thummim; the mitre; and the golden frontlet (*Ziz*), with its inscription of "Holiness to the Lord." The ideal type was fulfilled, and the poor shadows abolished for ever, by Him of whom it is said, "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

The priests were poor; they were very often entirely unlettered; they seem to have had for many centuries but little influence on the moral and spiritual life of the people. Hardly any good is recorded of them as a body throughout the four hundred and ten years during which the first Temple stood, as very little good had been recorded of them in the earlier ages, and not much in the ages which were to follow. We read of scarcely a single moral protest or spiritual awakenment which had its origin in the priestly body. Their temptation was to be absorbed in their elaborate ceremonials. As these differed but little from the ritual functions of surrounding heathendom they seem to have relapsed into apostasy with shameful readiness, and to have submitted without opposition to the idolatrous aberrations of king after king, even to the extent of admitting the most monstrous idols and the most abhorrent pollutions into the sacred precincts of the Temple, which it was their work to guard. When a prophet arose out of their own supine and torpid ranks he invariably counted his brethren amongst his deadliest antagonists. They ridiculed him as they ridiculed Isaiah; they smote him on the cheek as they smote Jeremiah. The only thing which roused them was the spirit of revolt against their vapid ceremonialism, and their abject obedience to kings. The Presbyterate could have no worse ideal,

and could follow no more pernicious example, than that of the Jewish priesthood. The days of their most rigid ritualism were the days also of their most desperate moral blindness. The crimes of their order culminated when they combined, as one man, under their high priest Caiaphas and their sagan Annas[1] to reject Christ for Barabbas, and to hand over to the Gentiles for crucifixion the Messiah of their nation, the Lord of Life.

[1] On this sagan, the later title for the "second priest," see 2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lii. 24.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TEMPLE SACRIFICES.

1 KINGS viii. 62—66, ix. 25.

"I have chosen this house to Myself for an house of sacrifice."—2 Chron. vii. 12.

"Gifts and sacrifices, that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only . . carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation."—Heb. ix. 9, 10.

THE whole sacrificial system with which our thoughts of Judaism are perhaps erroneously, and much too exclusively identified, furnishes us with many problems.

Whether it was originally of Divine origin, or whether it was only an instinctive expression, now of the gratitude, and now of the guilt and fear, of the human heart, we are not told. Nor is the basal idea on which it was founded ever explained to us. Were the ideas of "atonement" or propitiation (*Kippurim*) really connected with those of substitution and vicarious punishment? Or was the main conception that of *self*-sacrifice, which was certainly most prominent in the burnt offerings? Doubtless the views alike of priests and worshippers were to a great extent indefinite. We are not told what led Cain and Abel to present their sacrifices to God; nor did Moses—if he were its founder—furnish any theories to explain the elaborate system laid down

in the Book of Leviticus. The large majority of the Jews probably sacrificed simply because to do so had become a part of their religious observances, and because in doing so they believed themselves to be obeying a Divine command. Others, doubtless, had as many divergent theories as Christians have when they attempt to explain the Atonement. The "*substitution*" theory of the "sin offering" finds little or no support from the Old Testament; not only is it never stated, but there is not a single clear allusion to it. It is emphatically asserted by later Jewish authorities, such as Rashi, Aben Ezra, Moses ben-Nachman, and Maimonides, and is enshrined in the Jewish liturgy. Yet Dr. Edersheim writes: "The common idea that the burning, either of part or the whole of the sacrifice, pointed to its destruction, and symbolised the wrath of God and the punishment due to sin, does not seem to accord with the statements of Scripture."[1]

Sacrifices were of two kinds, bloody (*Zebach*; LXX., *θυσία*), or unbloody (*minchah*, *korban*; LXX., *δῶρον*, *προσφορά*). The latter were oblations. Such were the cakes of shewbread, the meal and drink offerings, the first sheaf at Passover, the two loaves at Pentecost. In almost every instance the *minchah* accompanied the offering of a sacrificial victim.

The two general rules about all victims for sacrifice were, (1) that they should be without blemish and without spot, as types of perfectness; and (2) that every sacrifice should be salted with salt, as an antiseptic, and therefore a type of incorruption.[2]

Sacrificial victims could only be chosen from oxen,

[1] He refers to Wünsche, *Die Leiden des Messias.*

[2] Mark ix. 49.

sheep, goats, turtle doves, and young pigeons—the latter being the offering of the poor who could not afford the costlier victims.

Sacrifices were also divided generally (1) into free, or obligatory; (2) public, or private; and (3) most holy or less holy, of which the latter were slain at the north and the former at the east side of the altar.[1] The offerer, according to the Rabbis, had to do five things—to lay on hands, slay, skin, dissect, and wash the inwards. The priest had also to do five things at the altar itself—to catch the blood, sprinkle it, light the fire, bring up the pieces, and complete the sacrifices.

Sacrifices are chiefly dwelt upon in the Priestly Code; but nowhere in the Old Testament is their significance formally explained, nor for many centuries was the Levitic ritual much regarded.[2]

The sacrifices commanded in the Pentateuch fall under four heads. (1) The burnt offering (*Olah, Kalil*),[3] which typified complete self-dedication, and which even the heathen might offer; (2) the sin offering (*Chattath*),[4] which made atonement for the offender; (3) the tres-

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[1] Lev. vi. 17, vii. 1, xiv. 13. On this whole subject see Edersheim, pp. 79-111.

[2] See Judg. vi. 19-21; 1 Sam. ii. 13, xiv. 35; 1 Kings xix. 21; 2 Kings v. 17.

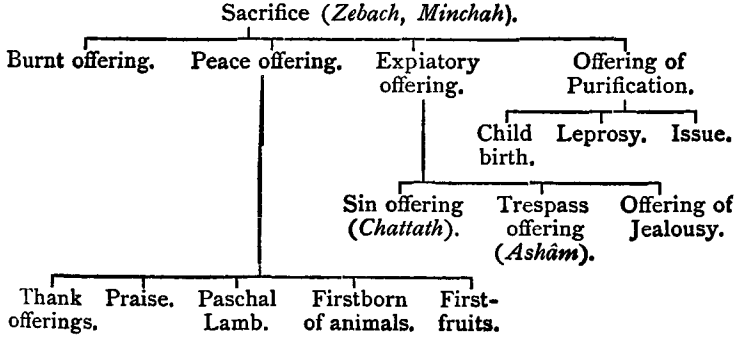
[3] LXX., ὁλοκαύτωμα.

[4] LXX., περὶ ἁμαρτίας. *Chattath* and *Ashâm* both imply guilt, debt, sin. "The trespass offering affected rights of property, but no precise definition of the two kinds of expiatory offerings can be based upon the statements made in the Pentateuch in respect to them. Perhaps they cannot all be referred to the same time and to one author; for they prescribe both sin and trespass offerings in cases of Levitical impurity, and also for moral offences. All Levites attempting to establish palpable distinctions between them must inevitably fail"

pass offering (*Ashâm*),[1] which atones for some special offence, whether doubtful or certain, committed through ignorance; and (4) the thank offering, eucharistic peace offering (*Shelem*),[2] or "offering of completion," which followed the other sacrifices, and of which the flesh was eaten by the priest and the worshippers.[3]

The oldest practice seems only to have known of burnt offerings and thank offerings, and the former seem only to have been offered at great sacrificial feasts. Even in Deuteronomy a common phrase for sacrifices is "eating before the Lord," which is almost ignored in the Priestly Code. Of the sin offering, which in that code has acquired such enormous importance, there is scarcely a trace—unless Hosea iv. 8 be one, which is doubtful—before Ezekiel, in whom the *Ashâm* and *Chattath* occur in place of the old pecuniary fines (2 Kings xii. 16). Originally sacrifice was a glad meal, and even in the oldest part of the code (Lev.

(Kalisch, *Leviticus*, part ii., p. 272). The general scheme of sacrifices, as they now stand in the Pentateuch, is as follows:—



[1] LXX., πλημμελεία.

[2] LXX., θυσία σωτηρίου.

[3] The phrase "wave offering" indicates the ceremony used by the priests in presenting peace offerings to God.

xvii.—xxvi.) sacrifices are comprised under the *Olam* and *Zebach.* The turning-point of the history of the sacrificial system is Josiah's reformation, of which the Priestly Code is the matured result.[1]

It is easy to see that sacrifices in general were eucharistic, dedicatory, and expiatory.

The eucharistic sacrifices (the meal and peace offerings) and the burnt offerings, which indicated the entire sacrifice of self, were the offerings of those who were in communion with God. They were recognitions of His absolute supremacy. The sin and trespass offerings were intended to recover a lost communion with God. And thus the sacrifices were, or ultimately came to be, the expression of the great ideas of thanksgiving, of self-dedication, and of propitiation. But the Israelites, "while they seem always to have retained the idea of propitiation and of eucharistic offering, constantly ignored the self-dedication, which is the link between the two, and which the regular burnt offering should have impressed upon them as their daily thought and duty." Had they kept this in view they would have been saved from the superstitions and degeneracies which made their use of the sacrificial system a curse and not a blessing. The expiatory conception, which was probably the latest of the three, expelled the others, and was perverted into the notion that God was a God of wrath, whose fury could be averted by gifts and His favour won by bribes. There was this truth in the notion of propitiation—that God hates, and is alienated by, and will punish, sin; and yet that in His mercy He has provided an Atonement for us. But in

[1] For the full development of these views, see Wellhausen's *Prolegomena.*

trying to imagine *how the sacrifice affected God*, the Israelites lost sight of the truth that *this* is an inexplicable mystery, and that all which we can know is the effect which *it can produce on the souls of man.* If they had interpreted the sacrifices as a whole to mean this only—that man is guilty and that God is merciful; and that though man's guilt separates him from God, reunion with Him can be gained by confession, penitence, and self-sacrifice, by virtue of an Atonement which He had revealed and would accept—then the effect of them would have been spiritually wholesome and ennobling. But when they came to think that sacrifices were presents to God, which might be put in the place of amendment and moral obedience, and that the punishment due to their offences might be thus mechanically diverted upon the heads of innocent victims, then the sacrificial system was rendered not only nugatory but pernicious. Nor have Christians been exempt from a similar corruption of the doctrine of the Atonement. In treating it as vicarious and expiatory they have forgotten that it is unavailing unless it be also representative. In looking upon it as the atonement *for* sin they have overlooked that there can be no such atonement unless it be accompanied by redemption *from* sin. They have tacitly and practically acted on the notion, which in the days of St. Paul some even avowed, that "we may continue in sin that grace may abound." But in the great work of redemption the will of man cannot be otiose. He must himself die with Christ. As Christ was sacrificed for him, he, too, must offer his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. "Without the sin offering of the Cross," says Bishop Barry, "our burnt offering (of self-dedication) would be impossible; so also without

the burnt offering the sin offering will, to us, be unavailing."[1]

Many of the crudities, and even horrors, which, alike in Jewish and Christian times, have been mixed up with the idea of bloody sacrifices, would have been removed if more attention had been paid to the prominence and real significance of *blood* in the entire ritual. As taught by some revivalists the doctrine of the blood adds the most revolting touches to theories which assimulate God to Moloch; but the true significance of the phrase and of the symbol elevates the entire doctrine of sacrifice into a purer and more spiritual atmosphere.

The central significance of the whole doctrine lies in the ancient opinion that "the blood" of the sacrifice was "its life." This was why an expiatory power was ascribed to the blood. There was certainly no transfer of guilt to the animal, *for its blood remained clean and cleansing.* Nor was the animal supposed to undergo the transgressor's punishment; first, because this is nowhere stated, and next, because had that been the case, fine flour would certainly not have been permitted (as it was) as a sin offering.[2] Moreover, no wilful offence, no offence "with uplifted hand," *i.e.*, with evil premeditation, *could* be atoned for either by sin or trespass offerings;—though certainly so wide a latitude was given to the notion of sin as an *involuntary* error as to tend to break down the notion of moral responsibility. The sin offering was further offered for some purely accidental and ceremonial offences, which could not involve any real conscious-

[1] See Bishop Barry's article on Sacrifice in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, to which, in this paragraph, I am much indebted.

[2] Lev v. 11-13.

ness of guilt.[1] The "blood of the covenant" (Exod. xxiv. 4-8) was not of the *sin* offering, but of peace and burnt offerings; and though, as Canon Cook says, we read of blood in paganism as a propitiation to a hostile demon, "we seem to seek in vain for an instance in which the blood, as a natural symbol for the soul, was offered as an atoning sacrifice."[2] "The atoning virtue of the blood lies not in its material substance, but in the life of which it is the vehicle," says Bishop Westcott. "The blood always includes the thought of the life preserved and active beyond death. It is not simply the price by which the redeemed were purchased, but the power by which they were quickened so as to be capable of belonging to God." "To drink the blood of Christ," says Clement of Alexandria, "is to partake of the Lord's incorruption."[3]

Besides the points to which we have alluded, there is a further difficulty created by the singular silence *respecting sin offerings of any kind*, except in that part of the Old Testament which has recently acquired the name of the Priestly Code.[4]

The word *Chattath*, in the sense of sin offering, occurs in Exod. xxix., xxx., and many times in Leviticus and Numbers, and six times in Ezekiel. Otherwise

[1] See Kuenen, *Rel. of Israel*, ii. pp. 259-76.

[2] *Speaker's Commentary*, Leviticus, p. 508. In Lev. xvii. 11—"For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and *I have ordained it for you upon the altar* to make atonement for your souls; for the blood it is which makes atonement by means of the soul"—Kurtz points out that the blood is simply *chosen as a symbol*, and the superstition that there is any atoning virtue in the blood itself is excluded.

[3] *Pæd.*, ii. 2, § 19.

[4] The Priestly Code is that part of the Pentateuch which is occupied with public worship and the function of priests—viz., most of Leviticus; Exod. xxv.-xl.; Numb. i.-x., xv.-xx., xxv.-xxxvi. (with inconsiderable exceptions)

in the Old Testament it is barely mentioned, except in the post-exilic Books of Chronicles (2 Chron. xxix. 24) and Ezra (viii. 25).[1] It is not mentioned in any other historic book; nor in any prophet except Ezekiel. Again, as we have seen, the Day of Atonement leaves not a trace in any of the earlier historic records of Scripture, and is found only in the authorities above mentioned. Through all the rest of Scripture the scape-goat is unmentioned, and Azazel is ignored. Dr. Kalisch goes so far as to say that "there is conclusive evidence to prove that the Day of Atonement was instituted considerably more than a thousand years after the death of Moses and Aaron.[2] For even in Ezekiel, who wrote B.C. 574, there is no Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month, but on the first and seventh of the first month (Abib, Nisan)." He thinks it utterly impossible that, had it existed in his time, Ezekiel could have blotted out the holiest day of the year, and substituted two of his own arbitrary choice.[3] The rites, moreover, which he describes differ wholly from those laid down in Leviticus. Even in Nehemiah there is no notice of the Day of Atonement, though a day was observed on the twenty-fourth of the month.

[1] In Psalm xl. 6, "Sin offering hast Thou not required." The Psalm is perhaps of the age of Jeremiah.

[2] He argues that even in Chronicles it is not mentioned; and that there was no curtain (*Parocheth*) before the Holiest in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings vi. 31, 32. Comp. Ezek. xli. 23, 24; 1 Kings viii. 8) He considers that 2 Chron. iii. 14 (the only place in the Old Testament where *Parocheth* occurs except in the P.C.) cannot overthrow 1 Kings vi. 21, which speaks only of chains of gold between the Holy and the Holiest. (There was a curtain in Herod's Temple, Matt. xxvii. 51; Heb. ix. 3). But if there was no *Parocheth* in Solomon's Temple, the rule of Lev. xvi. 2, 12, 15 could not have been observed.

[3] This caused immense perplexity to the Rabbis. *Shabbath*, xiii. 2; *Chagigah*, xiii. 1; *Menachoth*, xlv. 1.

Hence this learned writer infers that even in B.C. 440 the Great Day of Atonement was not yet recognised, and that the pagan element of sending the scape-goat to Azazel, the demon of the wilderness, proves the late date of the ceremony.

It is interesting to observe how utterly the sacrificial priestly system, in the abuses which not only became involved in it, but seemed to be almost inseparable from it, is condemned by the loftier spiritual intuition which belongs to phases of revelation higher than the external and the typical.

Thus in the Old Testament no series of inspired utterances is more interesting, more eloquent, more impassioned and ennobling, than those which insist upon the utter nullity of all sacrifices in themselves, and their absolute insignificance in comparison with the lightest element of the moral law. On this subject the Prophets and the Psalmists use language so sweeping and exceptionless as almost to repudiate the desirability of sacrifices altogether. They speak of them with a depreciation akin to scorn. It may be doubted whether they had the Mosaic system with all its details, as we know it, before them. They do not enter into those final elaborations which it assumed, and not one of them so much as alludes to any service which resembles the powerfully symbolic ceremonial of the Great Day of Atonement. But they speak of the ceremonial law in such fragments and aspects of it as were known to them. They deal with it as priests practised it, and as priests taught—if they ever taught anything—respecting it. They speak of it as it presented itself to the minds of the people around them, with whom it had become rather a substitute for moral efforts and an obstacle in the path of righteousness,

than an aid to true religion. And this is what they say:—

"Hath the Lord as great delight in sacrifice," asks the indignant SAMUEL, "as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."[1]

"I hate, I despise your feasts," says Jehovah by AMOS, "and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer Me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Turn thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."[2]

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord," asks MICAH, "and bow myself before the most high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"[3]

HOSEA again in a message of Jehovah, twice quoted on different occasions by our Lord, says: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."[4]

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[1] 1 Sam. xv. 22.

[2] Amos v. 21-23.

[3] Micah vi. 6-8. Some suppose that the words are attributed to Balaam (see verse 5).

[4] Hosea vi. 6.

ISAIAH also, in the word of the Lord, gives burning expression to the same conviction: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of lambs, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hands, to trample My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a cumbrance unto Me; I am weary to bear them. . . . Wash you, make you clean!"[1]

The language of JEREMIAH'S message is even more startling: "*I spake not unto your fathers*, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice." And again—in the version of the LXX., given in the margin of the Revised Version for the unintelligible rendering of the Authorised Version—he asks: "Why hath the beloved wrought abomination in My house? Shall vows and holy flesh take away from thee thy wickedness, or shalt thou escape by these?"[2]

Jeremiah is, in fact, the most anti-ritualistic of the prophets. So far from having hid and saved the Ark, he regarded it as entirely obsolete (iii. 16). He cares only for the spiritual covenant written on the heart, and very little, if at all, for Temple services and Levitic scrupulosities (vii. 4-15, xxxi. 31-34).[3]

[1] Isa. i. 11-16. [2] Jer. vii. 22, xi. 15.

[3] Jer. xxxiii. 14-26 seems to speak in a different tone, but is probably an interpolation. It is not found in the LXX.

THE PSALMISTS are no less clear and emphatic in putting sacrifices nowhere in comparison with righteousness :—

"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices ;
Nor for thy burnt offerings which are continually before Me.
I will take no bullock out of thine house,
Nor he-goats out of thy folds.

. . . . . .

Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats ?
Offer unto God thanksgiving ;
And pay thy vows unto the Most High." [1]

And again :—

"For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it Thee :
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :
A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." [2]

And again :—

"Sacrifice and offering Thou hast no delight in ;
Mine ears hast thou opened :
Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required." [3]

And again :—

"To do justice and judgment
Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." [4]

[1] Psalm l. 8-14.

[2] Psalm li. 16, 17. It is difficult to believe that the two last verses of the Psalm are not a later addition.

[3] Psalm xl. 6.

[4] Prov. xxi. 3.

And again :—

"I will praise the name of God with a song,
And magnify it with thanksgiving.
This also shall please the Lord
Rather than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs." [1]

Surely the most careless and conventional reader cannot fail to see that there is a wide difference between the standpoint of the prophets, which is so purely spiritual, and that of the writers and redactors of the Priestly Code, whose whole interest centred in the sacrificial and ceremonial observances.

Nor is the intrinsic nullity of the sacrificial system less distinctly pointed out in the New Testament. The better-instructed Jews, enlightened by Christ's teaching, could give emphatic testimony to the immeasurable superiority of the moral to the ceremonial. The candid scribe, hearing from Christ's lips the two great commandments, answers, "Of a truth, Master, Thou hast well said that He is one; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, .. and to love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." [2]

And our Lord quoted Hosea with the emphatic commendation, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." [3] And on another occasion: "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." [4]

The presenting of our bodies, says St. Paul, as

[1] Psalm lxix. 30, 31.

[2] Mark xii. 32, 33. So in the Talmud: "Acts of justice are more meritorious than all sacrifices" (*Succoth.*, lxix. 2).

[3] Matt. ix. 13.

[4] Matt. xii. 7.

a living sacrifice is our reasonable service; and St. Peter calls all Christians a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifice.[1]

"It is impossible," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins;" and he speaks of the priests "daily offering the same sacrifice, the which can never take away sins."[2]

And again:—

"To do good and to distribute forget not: for with *such* sacrifices God is well pleased."[3]

The wisest fathers of Jewish thought in the post-exilic epoch held the same views. Thus the son of Sirach says: "He that keepeth the law bringeth offerings enough."[4] And Philo, echoing an opinion common among the best heathen moralists from Socrates to Marcus Aurelius,[5] writes, "The mind, when without blemish, is itself the most holy sacrifice, being entirely and in all respects pleasing to God."[6]

And what is very remarkable, modern Judaism now emphasises its belief that "neither sacrifices nor a Levitical system belong to the essence of the Old Testament."[7] Such was the view of the ancient Essenes, no less than of Maimonides or Abarbanel. Modern Rabbis even go so far as to argue that the whole system of Levitical sacrifice was an alien element,

[1] Rom. xii. 1; 1 Peter ii. 5.

[2] Heb. x. 4, 11.

[3] Heb. xiii. 16.

[4] Ecclus. xxxv. 1-15.

[5] Comp. Ov., *Trist.*, ii. 1, 75; Ep. xx. 81; Persius, ii. 45; Varro, *ap.* Arnob., *c. Natt.*, vii. 1. "Dii veri neque desiderant ea, neque deposcunt."

[6] Philo, *De Victimis*, 5.

[7] A. Geiger, *Judenthum und seine Geschichte*, Sect. 5.

introduced into Judaism from without, tolerated indeed by Moses, but only as a concession to the immaturity of his people and their hardness of heart.[1]

Such, too, was the opinion of the ancient Fathers,—of the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, of Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Cyril, and Theodoret, who are followed by such Roman Catholic theologians as Petavius and Bellarmine.[2]

This at any rate is certain :—that the Judaic system is not only abrogated, but rendered impossible. Whatever were its functions, God has stamped with absolute disapproval any attempt to continue them. They are utterly annulled and obliterated for ever.

"I am come to repeal the sacrifices." Such is the ἄγραφον δόγμα ascribed to Christ; "and unless ye desist from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not desist from you."[3] The argument of St. Paul in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, show us why this was inevitable; and they were but following the initiative of Christ and the teaching of His Spirit. It is a mistake to imagine that our Lord merely repudiated the inane pettinesses of Pharisaic formalism. He went much further. There is not the slightest trace that He personally observed the requirements of the ceremonial law. It is certain that He broke them when He touched the leper and the dead youth's bier. The

[1] Vajikra R., 22 and 34 *b*. They got over Jer. xxxiii. 18 (in Yalkuth, on the passage) by saying, "He that doeth repentance it is counted to him as if he offered all the sacrifices of the land." They held that the place of sacrifices was taken by prayer, penitence, and good works. See Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, i. 275.

[2] See Spencer, *De Legg. Ritual.*, iii.; *Dissert.*, ii., chap. 1.

[3] Evang. Ebion. *ap.* Epiph., *Hær.*, xxx. 16.

law insisted on the centralisation of worship, but Jesus said, "The day cometh, and now is, when neither in Jerusalem, nor yet in this mountain, shall men worship the Father. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The law insisted, with extreme emphasis, on the burdensome distinctions between clean and unclean meats. Jesus said that it is not that which cometh from without, but that which cometh from within which defileth a man, and this He said "*making all meats clean.*"[1] St. Paul, when the types of Mosaism had been for ever fulfilled in Christ, and the antitype had thus become obsolete and pernicious, went further still. Taking circumcision, the most ancient and most distinctive rite of the Old Dispensation, he called it "concision" or mere mutilation, and said thrice over, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but 'a new creature'"; "but faith working by love," "but the keeping of the commandment of God." The whole system of Judaism was local, was external, was minute, was inferior, was transient, was a concession to infirmity, was a yoke of bondage: the whole system of Christianity is universal, is spiritual, is simple, is unsacrificial, is unsacerdotal, is perfect freedom. Judaism was a religion of a temple, of sacrifices, of a sacrificial priesthood: Christianity is a religion in which the Spirit of God

"Doth prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure."

It is a religion in which there is no more sacrifice for sin, because the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, has been consummated for

[1] Mark vii. 19.

ever. It is a religion in which there is no altar but the Cross; in which there is no priest but Christ, except so far as *every* Christian is by metaphor a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifices which alone are acceptable to God.

The Temple of Solomon lasted only four centuries, and they were for the most part years of dishonour, disgrace, and decadence.[1] Solomon was scarcely in his grave before it was plundered by Shishak. During its four centuries of existence it was again stripped of its precious possessions at least six times, sometimes by foreign oppressors, sometimes by distressed kings. It was despoiled of its treasure by Asa, by Jehoash of Judah, by Jehoash of Israel, by Ahaz, by Hezekiah, and lastly by Nebuchadnezzar. After such plunderings it must have completely lost its pristine splendour. But the plunder of its treasures was nothing to the pollutions of its sanctity. They began as early as the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah. Ahaz gave it a Syrian altar, Manasseh stained it with impurities, and Ezekiel in its secret chambers surveyed "the dark idolatries of alienated Judah."

And in the days when Judaism most prized itself on ritual faithfulness, the Lord of the Temple was insulted in the Temple of the Lord, and its courts were turned by greedy priests and Sadducees into a cowshed, and a dovecot, and a fair, and a usurer's mart, and a robber's den.

From the first the centralisation of worship in the Temple must have been accompanied by the danger of dissociating religious life from its daily social environ-

[1] It was twice repaired—about B.C. 856 in the reign of Joash, and about two centuries later under Josiah.

ments. The multitudes who lived in remote country places would no longer be able to join in forms of worship which had been carried on at local shrines. Judaism, as the prophets so often complain, tended to become too much a matter of officialism and function, of rubric and technique, which always tend to substitute external service for true devotion, and to leave the shell of religion without its soul.[1]

Even when it had been purified by Josiah's reformation, the Temple proved to be a source of danger and false security. It was regarded as a sort of Palladium. The formalists began to talk and act as though it furnished a mechanical protection, and gave them licence to transgress the moral law. Jeremiah had sternly to warn his countrymen against this trust in an idle formalism. "Amend your ways and your doings," he said. "Behold, ye trust in lying words which cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye have not known, and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations?"

The Temple of Solomon was defaced and destroyed and polluted by the Babylonians, but not until it had been polluted by the Jews themselves with the blood of prophets, by idolatries, by chambers of unclean imagery. It was rebuilt by a poor band of disheartened exiles to be again polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes, and ultimately to become the headquarters of a narrow, arrogant, and intriguing Pharisaism. It was rebuilt once more by Herod, the brutal Idumean

[1] See Isa. xxix. 13, 14; Ezek. xxxiii. 31; Matt. xv. 7-9; Col. ii 20-22, etc. Comp. Wellhausen, pp. 77-79.

usurper, and its splendour inspired such passionate enthusiasm that when it was wrapped in flames by Titus, it witnessed the carnage of thousands of maddened and despairing combatants.

> "As 'mid the cedar courts and gates of gold
> The trampled ranks in miry carnage rolled
> To save their Temple every hand essayed,
> And with cold fingers grasp'd the feeble blade;
> Through their torn veins reviving fury ran
> And life's last anger warm'd the dying man."

Yet that last Temple had been defiled by a worse crime than the other two. It had witnessed the priestly idols and the priestly machinations which ended in the murder of the Son of God. From the Temple sprang little or nothing of spiritual importance. Intended to teach the supremacy of righteousness, it became the stronghold of mere ritual. For the development of true holiness, as apart from ceremonial scrupulosity, its official protectors rendered it valueless.

We are not surprised that Christianity knows no temple but the hearts of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; and that the characteristic of the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband, is:—

"And I saw no temple therein." [1]

Abundantly was the menace fulfilled in which Jehovah warned Solomon after the Feast of Dedication that if Israel swerved into immorality and idolatry, that house should be an awful warning—that its blessing should be exchanged into a curse, and that every one who passed by it should be astonished and should hiss.[2]

[1] Rev. xxi. 22.

[2] 1 Kings ix. 6-9. The phrase "at this house which is high" is uncertain. The Vulgate has "domus hæc erit in exemplum"; the Peshito and Arabic have "and this house shall be destroyed."

CHAPTER XX.

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY.

1 KINGS x. 1—29.

"O Luxury! thou curs'd by Heaven's decree!
How do thy potions with insidious joy
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms by thee to sickly greatness grown
Boast of a florid vigour not their own."

GOLDSMITH, *Deserted Village.*

"The Queen of the South shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it. For she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon."—MATT. xii. 42.

THE history of the Temple is the event which gives supreme religious importance to the reign of one who became in other respects a worldly and irreligious king. It is for this reason that I have dwelt upon its significance, and on the many interesting questions which its worship naturally suggests. Solomon gave an impulse to outward service, not to spiritual life. His religion was mainly that form of externalism which rose but little above the

"Gay religions full of pomp and gold"

of the surrounding heathens. The other fragments of his story which have been preserved for us are mainly of a political character. They point us to Solomon in his wealth and ostentation, and contain nothing specially

edifying. Our Lord thought less of all this splendour than of the flower of the field. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Princes who have once begun to build find a certain fascination in the task. After the seven years devoted to the Temple, Solomon occupied thirteen more in building "halls of Lebanoniac cedar" for himself, for his audience-chamber, and for Pharaoh's daughter.

Chief of these were:—

1. The house of the forest of Lebanon, a sort of arsenal so called from its triple rows of cedar pillars, on which hung the golden shields for the king's guards when they attended his great visits to the Temple.

2. The justice hall, the "Sublime Porte" of Jerusalem, built of gold and cedar. It contained the famous Lion Throne of gold and ivory, with two lions on each of its six steps.[1] It is not known whether these buildings formed part of the palace and harem of Solomon, nor is it worth while to waste time on the impossible attempt to reconstruct them.

Solomon also built the fortification of Jerusalem known as the "Millo," and the wall of Jerusalem, and repaired the breaches of the city of David,[2] as well as the fortresses and treasure cities to which we have

[1] To form some notion of these buildings, see the excellent illustrations in Stade, i. 318-25.

[2] The hill of Zion, the city of David, had become overcrowded, and the hill which lay to the north, which was called Millo, or "the border," had to be included in it. A narrow valley lay between them. "Mount Moriah, and its offshoot Ophel, remained outside the city, and the latter was inhabited by the remnant of the Jebusites" (Grätz, *Hist. of the Jews*, E. T., i. 121); Millo, LXX., ἡ ἄκρα. See 1 Macc. iv. 41, xiii. 49-52; Josephus, *Antt.*, XIII. vi. 7.

already alluded, and the summer palaces in the region of Lebanon known as "the delights of Solomon."[1] Amid these records of palatial architecture we hear next to nothing of the religious life.

He further dazzled his people by an extensive system of foreign commerce. His land-traffic with Arabia familiarised them with spicery (*necoth*), gum tragacanth, frankincense, myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and with precious stones of all kinds. From Egypt he obtained horses and chariots. They were brought from Tekoa, by his merchants, and kept by Solomon, or sold at a profit.[2]

He found a ready market for them among the Hittite and Aramæan kings. Emulating the Phœnicians, and apparently invading the monopoly of Tyre, he had—if we may take the chronicler literally—a fleet of "ships of Tarshish" which sailed along the coasts of Spain.[3] Above all, he made the daring attempt to establish a fleet of Tarshish-ships at Ezion-Geber, the port of Elath, at the north of the Gulf of Akaba. This fleet sailed down the Red Sea to Ophir—perhaps Abhîra, at the mouth of the Indus—and amazed the simple Hebrews with the sight of gorgeous iridescent peacocks, wrinkled chattering apes, the red and richly scented sandal wood of India, and the large tusks of elephants from which cunning artificers carved the smooth ivory to inlay furniture, thrones, and ultimately even houses, with lustrous ornamentation. Cinnamon came to him from Ceylon, and "sapphires" (*lapis lazuli*) from

[1] 1 Kings ix. 19.

[2] The "linen yarn" of 1 Kings x. 28 seems to be an error. The Hebrew is מִקְוֵה; LXX., ἐκ Θεκουέ; Vulg., *de Coâ*; R.V., "in droves."

[3] 2 Chron. ix. 21.

Babylon.[1] Other services which he rendered to his capital and kingdom were more real and permanent.

1. Jerusalem may have been in part indebted to Solomon for its supply of water. The magnificent springs of pure gushing water at Etam are still called "Solomon's fountains," and it is believed that he used their rocky basins as reservoirs from which to irrigate his garden in the Wady Urtas (Lat., *Hortus*). Etam is two hours distant from Jerusalem, and if Solomon built the aqueduct which once conveyed its water supply to the city he proved himself a genuine benefactor.[2] There was immense need of the "fons perennis aquæ" of which Tacitus speaks for the purifications of the Temple, soiled by the reek and offal of so many holocausts.

2. Maritime allusions now began to appear in Hebrew literature;[3] and maritime enterprise produced the marvellous effect it always produces on the character and progress of the nation. Along the black basalt roads —the king's highways—of which the construction was necessitated by the outburst of commercial activity flocked hundreds of foreign visitors, not only merchantmen and itinerant traffickers, but governors of provinces, and vassal or allied princes. The isolated and stationary tribes of Palestine suddenly found themselves face

[1] See Max Müller, *Lectures on Language*, i. 191. The names *Shen Habbim*, "ivory" (Sanskr. *ibhas*, "elephant"), *Kophim*, "apes" (Sanskr. *kapi*), *Tukkyim*, "peacocks" (Tamil, *togei*), "algum trees" (Sanskr. *Valgaka*, LXX. πελεκητά, Alex. ἀπελέκητα, Vulg. *thyina*), all point to India. Aloes (*ahalim*, Psalm xlv. 8) are a fragrant tree of Malacca; cassia (Ind. *koost*), cinnamon (*cacyn-nama*) come from Ceylon. See Stanley, ii. 185. European history here first comes into contact with Sanskrit.

[2] See Eccles. ii. 4-6. See on the extensive water-works, Ewald, iii. 252-57.

[3] 2 Chron. ix. 21.

to face with a new and splendid civilisation. Admiring visitors flocked to see the great king's magnificence and to admire his foreign curiosities, bringing with them presents of gold and silver, armour [1] and spicery, horses and mules, the broidered garments of Babylon, and robes rich with the crimson, purple, and scarlet dyes of Tyre.[2] Instead of riding like his predecessors on a humble mule, the king made his royal progress to his watered garden at Etam drawn by steeds magnificently caparisoned. He reclined in "Pharaoh's chariot" richly chased and brilliantly coloured. He was followed by a train of archers riding on war-horses and clothed in purple, and was escorted by a body-guard of youths tall and beautiful, whose dark and flowing locks glittered with gold dust. In the heat of summer, if we may accept the poetic picture of the Song of Songs, he would be luxuriously carried to some delicious retreat amid the hills of myrrh and leopard-haunted woods of Lebanon, in a palanquin of cedar wood with silver pillars, purple cushions, and richly embroidered curtains, wearing the jewelled crown which his mother placed on his head on the day of his espousals.[3] Or he would sit to do justice on his throne of ivory and gold,[4] with its steps guarded by golded lions leaning upon the golden bull of Ephraim which formed its back,[5] in all his princely beauty,

[1] נֶשֶׁק; LXX., στακτή, "oil of myrrh."

[2] 1 Kings x. 25.

[3] See Cant. i. 9, iii. 6-11, iv. 8; 2 Chron. xi. 6; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vii. 3; Psalm xlv.

[4] The great statue of Athene by Phidias was of this "Chryselephantine" work. Comp. "ivory palaces" (Psalm xlv. 8; 1 Kings xxii. 39; Amos iii. 15) and "ivory couches" (Amos vi. 4).

[5] Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. v. 2; Hosea iv. 16; Jer. xxxi. 18, etc.

"anointed with the oil of gladness," his lips full of grace, his garments breathing of perfume. On great occasions of state his Queen, and the virgins that bore her company, would stand among the crowd of inferior princesses, in garments of the wrought gold of Ophir, in which she had been carried from the inner palace upon tapestries of needlework. In the pomp of such ceremonials, amid bursts of rejoicing melody, the people began to believe that not even the Pharaohs of Egypt, or the Tyrian kings with "every precious stone as their covering," could show a more glorious pageant of royal state.[1]

This career of magnificence culminated in the visit of Balkis, the Queen of Sheba,[2] who came to him across the desert with "a very great train of her camels, bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones." She saw his abounding prosperity, his peaceful people, his houses, his vineyards at Beth-Haccerem, his parks and gardens, his pools and fruit trees, his herds of cattle, his horses, chariots, and palanquins, and all the delight of the sons of men. She saw his men singers and women singers with their harps of red sandal wood and gold. She saw him at the banquet at his golden table covered in boundless profusion with delicacies

[1] Ezek. xxvii., xxviii; Zech. ix. 3.

[2] The Abyssinian, confusing Sheba (Arabia Felix) with Seba (as do Origen and Augustine), call her Makeda, Queen of Abyssinia, and say that she had a son by Solomon named Melinek (Ludolphus, *Æthiop.*, ii. 3), from whom all their emperors down to Theodore were descended. The legend of the Queen of Sheba is related in the Qur'an, *Sura* xxvii. 20-40 (chapter of the Ant). The Arabs call her Balkis, whose legends are narrated by D'Herbelot (*Bibl. Or.*, s.v. Balki). Josephus identifies her with Nicaule (the Nitocris of Herod., ii. 100), Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vi. 2. In the New Testament she is called "the Queen of the South" (Matt. xii. 42).

brought from every land. She saw his hosts of beautiful and richly dressed slaves with lavers, dishes, and goblets all made of the gold of Uphaz. She saw him dispensing justice in his pillared hall of cedar, seated on his lion-throne. She saw the golden shields and targets[1] carried before him as he went in state to the Temple over the Mount, across the valley, and mounted from the palace to the sacred courts by the gilded staircase with its balustrades of aromatic sandal wood.[2] Perhaps she was present as a spectator at some great Temple festival. And when she had tested his wisdom by communing with him of all that was in her heart, "there was no more spirit in her." She confessed that the half of his wisdom and glory had not been reported to her. Happy were his servants, happy the courtiers who stood by him and heard his words! Blessed was the Lord his God who delighted in him, and who, out of love for Israel, had given them such a king to do justice and judgment among them. The visit ended with an interchange of royal presents.[3] Solomon, we are vaguely told, "gave unto her all her desire, whatsoever she asked," and sent her away glad-hearted to her native land, leaving behind her a

[1] He had made two hundred large shields (*tsinnîm*, *θυρεοί*, *scuta*) and three hundred targets (*maginnîm*, *ἀσπίδες*, *clypei*) of gold at fabulous cost (1 Kings x. 16). They were all plundered by Shishak.

[2] 1 Kings x. 5, but "ascent" should perhaps be "burnt offering," as in margin of R.V. and in all the versions. Comp. 2 Chron. ix. 4 (LXX.). A special seat or platform of brass seems to have been assigned to Solomon in the Temple court (2 Kings xi. 14, xvi. 18, xxiii. 3; 2 Chron. vi. 13).

[3] Josephus says that she introduced the balsam plant into Palestine, which, in later years at Jericho, became a great source of revenue. Jer. viii. 22, xlvi. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 17; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vi. 6, XIV. iv. 1, XV. iv. 2; Pliny, *H. N.*, xii. 54, xiii. 9 (but see Gen. xliii. 11).

trail of legends. Before her departure she opened her treasures, and gave him vast stores of spicery and gold.[1]

And to sum up the accounts, which read like a page of the story of Haroun al Raschid, the king made silver to be as stones in Jerusalem, so that it was nothing accounted of in the day of Solomon,[2] and the cedars made he to be as the sycomores which are in the "Shefelah" for multitude.

It is around this epoch of Solomon's career that the legends of the East mainly cluster. They have received a larger development from the allusions to Mohammed in the Qur'an.[3] They take the place of the personal incidents of which so few are recorded, although Solomon occupies so large a space in sacred history. "That stately and melancholy figure—in some respects the grandest and the saddest in the Sacred Volume—is in detail little more than a mighty 'shadow.' Yet in later Jewish records he is scarcely mentioned. Of all the characters in the sacred history he is the most purely secular; and merely secular magnificence was an excrescence, not a native growth of the chosen people."[4]

[1] Psalm lxxii. 15. Spices, Herod., iii. 107-113. For one hundred and twenty talents we should probably read twenty (comp. Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vi. 6), *i.e.*, twelve thousand pounds. Into the riddles of Balkis (1 Kings x. 1, "hard questions"; LXX., *αἰνίγματα*), and all the strange Talmudic and Arabian legends which have gathered round her visit, we need not enter. I may perhaps refer to my little monograph on Solomon (pp. 134-37), in the Men of the Bible series.

[2] The 666 gold talents of his revenue are estimated at £3,613,500, and this is described as *his own* revenue, exclusive of tolls, tributes, etc. (1 Kings x. 15). Presents reached him from "kings of the mingled people" (Jer. xxv. 24), Pachas of the country (פַּחַת Ezra v. 6; Neh. v. 14).

[3] See Weil, *Biblische Legenden*; D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Oriental*, s.v. Soliman ben-Daoud; Qur'an, *Suras* xxii., xxvii., xxviii., xxxiv. "Suleyman" means "Little Solomon," a term of affection.

[4] Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 166, 167.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOLLOW PROSPERITY.

1 KINGS xi.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."—ECCLES. i. 2.

"At every draught more large and large they grow
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe,
Till, sapp'd their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round."

GOLDSMITH.

THERE was a *ver rongeur* at the root of all Solomon's prosperity. His home was afflicted with the curse of his polygamy, his kingdom with the curse of his despotism. Failure is stamped upon the issues of his life.

1. His Temple was a wonder of the world; yet his own reign was scarcely over before it was plundered by the Egyptian king who had overthrown the feeble dynasty on alliance with which he had trusted. Under later kings its secret chambers were sometimes desecrated, sometimes deserted. It failed to exercise the unique influence in support of the worship of Jehovah for which it had been designed. Some of Solomon's successors confronted it with a rival temple, and a rival high priest, of Baal, and suffered atrocious emblems of heathen nature-worship to profane its

courts. He himself became an apostate from the high theocratic ideal which had inspired its origin.

2. His long alliance and friendship with Hiram ended, to all appearance, in coolness and disgust, even if it be true that a daughter of Hiram was one of the princesses of his harem.[1] For his immense buildings had so greatly embarrassed his resources that, when the day for payment came, the only way in which he could discharge his obligations was by alienating a part of his dominions. He gave Hiram "twenty cities in the land of Galilee." The kings of Judah, down to the days of Hezekiah, and even of Josiah, show few traces of any consciousness that there was such a book as the Pentateuch and such a code as the Levitic law. Solomon may have been unaware that Phœnicia itself was part of the land which God had promised to His people. If that gift had lapsed through their inertness,[2] the law still remained, which said, "The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is Mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." It was a strong measure to resign any part of the soil of Judæa, even to discharge building debts, much more to pay for mercenaries and courtly ostentation. The transaction, dubious in every particular, was the evident cause of deep-seated dissatisfaction. Hiram thought himself ill-paid and unworthily treated. He found, by a personal visit, that these inland Galilæan towns, which were probably inhabited in great measure by a wretched and dwindling remnant of Canaanites,[3] were useless to him,

[1] See Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, x. 11.

[2] Lev. xxv. 23, 24. See Judg. i. 31, 32.

[3] Hence, perhaps, the name "Galilee of the nations" (Isa. ix. 1). Comp. "Harosheth of the nations" (Judg. iv. 2, 13). Hazor was in this district.

whereas he had probably hoped to receive part, at least, of the Bay of Acco (Ptolemais).[1] They added so little to his resources, that he complained to Solomon. He called the cities by the obscure, but evidently contemptuous name "*Cabul*," and gave them back to Solomon in disgust as not worth having.[2] What significance lies in the strange and laconic addition, "And Hiram sent to the king six-score talents of gold," it is impossible for us to understand. If the Tyrian king gave as a present to Solomon a sum which was so vast as at least to equal £720,000—"apparently," as Canon Rawlinson thinks, "to show that, although disappointed, he was not offended!"—he must have been an angel in human form.

3. Solomon's palatial buildings, while they flattered his pride and ministered to his luxury, tended directly, as we shall see, to undermine his power. They represented the ill-requited toil of hopeless bondmen, and oppressed freedmen, whose sighs rose, not in vain, into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.

4. His commerce, showy as it was, turned out to be transitory and useless. If for a time it enriched the king, it did not enrich his people. At Solomon's death, if not earlier, it not only languished but expired. Horses

[1] Milman, *Hist. of the Jews*, i. 321.

[2] 1 Kings ix. 10-13. There was a place called Cabul in Asher (Josh. xix. 27). Ewald thinks that Cabul was a sort of witticism meaning "as nothing." Josephus (*Antt.*, VIII. v. 3) says that in Phœnician χαβαλὼν means "not pleasing," and that Hiram would not take the cities. Nothing can be made of the allusion to this transaction in 2 Chron. viii. 1, 2. Why did Solomon re-occupy these cities? and why did Hiram give him one hundred and twenty talents of gold? The gloss put on the matter by late tradition cannot conceal the fact that Solomon tried to diminish his embarrassments by alienating some of the sacred territory.

and chariots might give a pompous aspect to stately pageants, but they were practically useless in the endless hills of which Palestine is mainly composed. Apes, peacocks, and sandal wood were curious and interesting, but they certainly did not repay the expense incurred in their importation. No subsequent sovereign took the trouble to acquire these wonders, nor are they once mentioned in the later Scriptures. Precious stones might gleam on the necks of the concubine, or adorn the housings of the steed, but nothing was gained from their barren splendour. At one time the king's annual revenue is stated to have been six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold; but the story of Hiram, and the impoverishment to which Rehoboam succeeded, show that even this exchequer had been exhausted by the sumptuous prodigalities of a too luxurious court. And, indeed, the commerce of Solomon gave a new and untheocratic bias to Hebrew development. The ideal of the old Semitic life was the pastoral and agricultural ideal. No other is contemplated in Exod. xxi.-xxix. Commerce was left to the Phœnicians and other races, so that the word for "merchant" was "Canaanite." But after the days of Solomon in Judah, and Ahab in Israel, the Hebrews followed eagerly in the steps of Canaan, and trade and commerce acting on minds materialised into worldliness brought their natural consequences. "He is a merchant," says Hosea (xii. 7); "the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to defraud." Here the words "he is a merchant" may equally well be rendered "as for Canaan"; and by Canaan is here meant Canaanised or commercial Ephraim. And the prophet continues, "And Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labour they shall find in me none

iniquity that were sin." In other words, these influences of foreign trade had destroyed the moral sense of Israel altogether: "Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh"—*i.e.*, "The Mortar," a bazaar of that name in Jerusalem—"for all the people of Canaan" (*i.e.*, the merchants) "are brought to silence." But the hypnotising influence of wealth became more and more a potent factor in the development of the people. By an absolute reversal of their ancient characteristics they learnt, in the days of the Rabbis, utterly to despise agriculture and extravagantly to laud the gains of commerce. Of too many of them it became true, that they

> "With dumb despair their country's wrongs behold,
> And dead to glory, only burn for gold."

It was the mighty hand of Solomon which first gave them an impulse in this direction, though he seems to have managed all his commerce with exclusive reference to his own revenues.

In the wake of commerce, and the inevitable intercourse with foreign nations which it involves, came as a matter of course the fondness for luxuries; the taste for magnificence; the fraternisation with neighbouring kings; the use of cavalry; the development of a military caste; the attempts at distant navigation; the total disappearance of the antique simplicity. In the train of these innovations followed the disastrous alterations of the old conditions of society of which the prophets so grievously complain—extortions of the corn market; the formation of large estates; the frequency of mortgages; the misery of peasant proprietorship, unable to hold its own against the accumulations of wealth; the increase of the wage-receiving class; and the fluctuations

of the labour market. These changes caused, by way of consequence, so much distress and starvation that even freeborn Hebrews were sometimes compelled to sell themselves into slavery as the only way to keep themselves alive.

So that the age of Solomon can in no respect be regarded as an age of gold. Rather, it resembled that grim Colossus of Dante's vision, which not only rested on a right foot of brittle clay, but was cracked and fissured through and through, while the wretchedness and torment which lay behind the outward splendour ever dripped and trickled downward till its bitter streams swelled the rivers of hell :—

> "Abhorrèd Styx, the flood of deadly hate,
> Sad Acheron of sorrow black and deep,
> Corytus named of lamentation loud
> Heard on its rueful stream, fierce Phlegethon,
> Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage."

But there was something worse even than this. The Book of Proverbs shows us that, as in Rome, so in Jerusalem, foreign immoralities became fatal to the growing youth. The *picta lupa barbara mitrâ*, with her fatal fascinations, and her banquets of which the guests were in the depths of Hades, became so common in Jerusalem that no admonitions of the wise were more needful than those which warned the "simple ones" that to yield to her seductive snares was to go as an ox to the slaughter, as a fool to the correction of the stocks.

5. Even were there no disastrous sequel to Solomon's story—if we saw him only in the flush of his early promise, and the noon of his highest prosperity—we could still readily believe that he passed through some of the experiences of the bitter and sated voluptuary

who borrows his name in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The human pathos, the fresh and varied interest, which meet us at every page of the annals of David, are entirely lacking in the magnificent monotony of the annals of Solomon. The splendours of materialism, which are mainly dwelt upon, could never satisfy the poorest of human souls. There are but two broad gleams of religious interest in his entire story—the narrative of his prayer for wisdom, and the prayer, in its present form of later origin, attributed to him at the Dedication Festival. All the rest is a story of gorgeous despotism, which gradually paled into

"The dim grey life and apathetic end."

"There was no king like Solomon: he exceeded all the kings of the earth," we are told, "for riches and for wisdom." But all that we know of such kings furnishes fresh proof of the universal experience that "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" are absolutely valueless for all the contributions they can lend to human happiness. The autocrats who have been most conspicuous for unchecked power and limitless resources have also been the most conspicuous in misery. We have but to recall Tiberius "*tristissimus ut constat hominum*," who, from the enchanted isle which he had degraded into the stye of his infamies, wrote to his servile senate that "all the gods and goddesses were daily destroying him"; or Septimius Severus, who, rising step by step from a Dalmatian peasant and common soldier to be emperor of the world, remarked with pathetic conviction, "*Omnia fui et nihil expedit*"; or Abderrahman the Magnificent, who, in all his life of success and prosperity, could only count fourteen happy days; or Charles V., over-eating himself in his monastic

retreat at San Yuste in Estremadura; or Alexander,[1] dying "as a fool dieth"; or Louis XIV., surrounded by a darkening horizon, and disillusioned into infinite *ennui* and chagrin; or Napoleon I., saying, "I regard life with horror," and contrasting his "abject misery" with the adored and beloved dominion of Christ, who was meek and lowly of heart. Napoleon confessed that, even in the zenith of his empire, and the fullest flush of his endless victories, his days were consumed in vanity and his years in trouble. The cry of one and all, finding that the soul, which is infinite, cannot be satisfied with the transient and hollow boons of earth, is, and ever must be, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." And this is one main lesson of the life of Solomon. Nothing is more certain than that, if earthly happiness is to be found at all, it can only be found in righteousness and truth; and if even these do not bring earthly *happiness* they securely give us a *blessedness* which is deeper and more eternal.

If the Book of Ecclesiastes, even traditionally, is the reflection and echo of Solomon's disenchantment, we see that in later years his soul had been sullied, his faith had grown dim, his fervour cold. All was emptiness. He stood horribly alone. His one son was not a wise man, but a fool. Gewgaws could no longer satisfy him. His wealth exhausted, his fame tarnished, his dominions reduced to insignificance, himself insulted by contemptible adversaries whom he could neither control nor punish, he entered on the long course of years "*plus pâles et moins couronnées.*" The peaceful is harried by petty raids; the magnificent is laden with

[1] The later Jews chose the name "Alexander" as the Western equivalent for Solomon: hence the names "*Alexander* Jannæus," etc.

debts; the builder of the Temple has sanctioned polytheism; the favourite of the nation has become a tyrant, scourging with whips an impatient people; the "darling of the Lord" has built shrines for Moloch and Astarte. The glamour of youth, of empire, of gorgeous tyranny was dispelled, and the splendid boy-king is the weary and lonely old man. Hiram of Tyre has turned in disgust from an ungenerous recompense. A new Pharaoh has dispossessed his Egyptian father-in-law and shelters his rebel servant. His shameful harem has given him neither a real home nor a true love; his commerce has proved to be an expensive failure; his politic alliances a hollow sham. In another and direr sense than after his youthful vision, "Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream."[1]

The Talmudists show some insight amid their fantasies when they write: "At first, before he married strange wives, Solomon reigned over the angels (1 Chron. xxix. 23); then only over all kingdoms (1 Kings iv. 21); then only over Israel (Eccles. i. 12); then only over Jerusalem (Eccles. i. 1). At last he reigned only over his staff—as it is said, 'And this was the portion of my labour'; for by the word '*this*,'" says Rav, "he meant that the only possession left to him was the staff which he held in his hand." The staff was not "the rod and staff" of the Good Shepherd, but the earthly staff of pride and pomp, and (as in the Arabian legend) the worm of selfishness and sensuality was gnawing at its base.

[1] 1 Kings iii. 15. See Ecclus. xlvii. 12-21.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD AGE OF SOLOMON.

1 KINGS xi. 1—13.

"That uxorious king, whose heart, though large,
Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul." MILTON, *Paradise Lost.*

"Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things?"—NEH. xiii. 26.

"That they might know, that wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished."—WISDOM xi. 16.

SOLOMON had endeavoured to give a one-sided development to Israelitish nationality, and a development little in accord with the highest and purest traditions of the people. What he did with one hand by building the Temple he undid with the other by endowing and patronising the worship of heathen deities.[1] In point of fact, Solomon was hardly a genuine off-shoot of the stem of Jesse. It is at least doubtful whether Bathsheba was of Hebrew race, and from her he may have derived an alien strain. It is at all events a striking fact that, so far from being regarded as an ideal Hebrew king, he was rather the reverse. The chronicler, indeed, exalts him as the supporter and

[1] "L'amour du luxe et de la nouveauté le conduira peu à peu à défaire l'œuvre de son père, à ruiner le peuple dont il pouvait faire le bonheur, à detruire les institutions, et à dédaigner le culte national, auquel il avait d'abord cherché à donner le plus grand éclat."—Munk, *Palestine*, p. 285.

redintegrator of the Priestly-Levitic system, which it is the main object of that writer to glorify; but this picture of theocratic purity, even if it be not altogether an anachronism, is only obtained by the total suppression of every incident in the story of Solomon which militates against it. In the Book of Kings we are faithfully told of the disgust of Hiram at the reward offered to him; of the alienation of a fertile district of the promised land; of the apostasy, the idolatries, and the reverses which disgraced and darkened his later years. The Book of Chronicles ignores every one of these disturbing particulars. It does not tell us of the depths to which Solomon fell, though it tells us of the extreme scrupulosity which regarded as a profanation the residence of his Egyptian queen on the hill once hallowed as the resting-place of Jehovah's Ark. Yet, if we understand in their simple sense the statements of the editor of the Book of Kings, and the documents on which he based his narrative, Solomon, even at the Dedication Festival, ignored all distinction between the priesthood and the laity. Nay, more than this, he seems to have offered, with his own hands, both burnt offerings and peace offerings three times a year,[1] and, unchecked by priestly opposition or remonstrance, to have "burnt incense before the altar that was before the Lord," though, according to the chronicler, it was for daring to attempt this that Uzziah was smitten with the horrible scourge of leprosy.

The ideal of a good and great king is set before us in the Book of Proverbs, and in many respects Solomon fell very far short of it. Further than this, there are in Scripture two warning sketches of everything which

1 Kings ix. 25.

a good king should *not* be and should *not* do, and these sketches exactly describe the very things which Solomon was and did. Those who take the view that the books of Scripture have undergone large later revision, see in each of these passages an unfavourable allusion to the king who raised Israel highest amongst the nations, only to precipitate her disintegration and ruin, and who combined the highest service to the centralisation of her religion with the deadliest insult to its supreme claim upon the reverence of the world.

1. The first of these pictures of selfish autocrats is found in 1 Sam. viii. 10-18:—

"And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of Him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint his captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his courtiers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants and your maidservants, and your goodliest oxen, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep, and you shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

2. The other, which is still more detailed and significant, was perhaps written with the express intention of warning Solomon's descendants from the example which Solomon had set.[1] It is found in Deut. xvii. 14-20. Thus, speaking of a king, the writer says:—

"Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself; that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be that when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book . . that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, . . that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, . . . to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel."

If Deuteronomy be of no older date than the days of Josiah, it is difficult not to see in this passage a distinct polemic against Solomon; for he did not do what he is here commanded, and he most conspicuously did every one of the things which is here forbidden.

It is quite clear that in his foreign alliances, in his commerce, in his cavalry, in his standing army, in his extravagant polygamy, in his exaggerated and exhausting magnificence, in his despotic autocracy, in his palatial architecture, and in his patronage of alien

[1] Modern criticism generally regards the Book of Deuteronomy, or some elements of it, as "the Book of the Law" which was found in the Temple by the high priest Hilkiah in the reign of Josiah. We shall speak of this in the following volume (in 2 Kings). See Deut. xvii. 18.

art, in his system of enforced labour, in his perilous religious syncretism, Solomon was by no means a king after the hearts of the old faithful and simple Israelites. They did not look with entire favour even on the centralisation of worship in a single Temple which interfered with local religious rites sanctioned by the example of their greatest prophets. His ideal differed entirely from that of the older patriarchs. He gave to the life of his people an alien development; he obliterated some of their best national characteristics; and the example which he set was at least as powerful for evil as for good.

When we read the lofty sentiments expressed by Solomon in his dedication prayer, we may well be amazed to hear that one who had aspirations so sublime could sink into idolatry so deplorable. If it was the object of the chronicler to present Solomon in unsullied splendour, he might well omit the deadly circumstance that when he was old, and prematurely old, "he loved many strange women, and *went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.*[1] *And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon.*[2] *And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.*"[3]

[1] LXX., ἣν φιλογύνγς. Vulg., *adamavit mulieres alienigenus.*

[2] Some suppose that this clause about Milcom is an interpolation from 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

[3] See Exod. xxxiv. 11-17; Deut. vii. 1-4. The Talmud makes one of its dishonest attempts to get rid of the fact; Shabbath, p. 56, *b.*

The sacred historian not only records the shameful fact, but records its cause and origin. The heart of Solomon was perverted, his will was weakened, his ideal was dragged into the mire by the "strange wives" who crowded his seraglio. He went the way that destroys kings.[1] The polygamy of Solomon sprang naturally from the false position which he had created for himself. A king who puts a space of awful distance between himself and the mass of his subjects—a king whose will is so absolute that life is in his smile and death in his frown—is inevitably punished by the loneliest isolation. He may have favourites, he may have flatterers, but he can have no friends. A thronged harem becomes to him not only a matter of ostentation and luxury, but a necessary resource from the vacuity and *ennui* of a desolate heart. Tiberius was driven to the orgies of Capreæ by the intolerableness of his isolation. The weariness of the king who used to take his courtiers by the button-hole and say, "*Ennuyons-nous ensemble*," drove him to fill up his degraded leisure in the *Parc aux Cerfs*. Yet even Louis XV had more possibilities of rational intercourse with human beings than a Solomon or a Xerxes. It was in the nature of things that Solomon, when he had imitated all the other surroundings of an Oriental despot, should sink, like other Oriental despots, from sensuousness into sensualism, from sensualism into religious degeneracy and dishonourable enervation.

Sanhedrin, *ff.* 55, 56. Justin Martyr preserves a tradition (*Dial. c. Tryph.*, 34) that Solomon in taking a Sidonian wife worshipped idols at Sidon. Muslim tradition attributes Solomon's idolatry to the tricks of demons who assumed his form (Qur'an, *Sura* ii. 99; but see *Sura* xxxviii. 30).

[1] Prov. xxxi. 3.

Two facts, both full of warning, are indicated as the sources of his ruin: (1) the number of his wives; and (2) their heathen extraction.

1. "He had," we are told, "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines."[1]

The numbers make up a thousand, and are almost incredible. We are told indeed that in the monstrosities of Indian absolutism the Great Mogul had a thousand wives; but even Darius, "the king" *par excellence*, the awful autocrat of Persia, had only one wife and thirty-two concubines.[2] It is inconceivable that the monarch of a country so insignificant as Palestine could have maintained so exorbitant a household in a small city like Jerusalem. Moreover, there is, on every ground, reason to correct the statement. Saul, so far as we know, had only one wife, and one concubine; David, though he put so little restraint on himself, had only sixteen; no subsequent king of Israel or Judah appears to have had even a small fraction of the number which is here assigned to Solomon, either by the disease of exaggeration or by some corruption of the text. More probably we should read seventy wives, which at least partially assimilates the number to the "threescore queens" of whom we read in the Canticles.[3] Even then we have a household which must have led to

[1] The Song of Solomon (vi. 8) gives him, besides the *'alamoth* ("damsels") "without number," the sixty wives (*saroth*), and the eighty concubines, who were partly perhaps their slaves.

[2] Parmen. *ap.* Athen., *Deipnos.*, iii. 3. Comp. Quint. Curt., *Vit. Alex.*, iii. 3. Amehhate of Egypt had more than three hundred and seventeen wives (Brugsch, *Egypt*, iii. 607, E.T.). Rehoboam, who had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, left twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. Solomon, so far as we know, had only one son and two daughters.

[3] Cant. vi. 8.

miserable complications. The seraglio at Jerusalem must have been a burning fiery furnace of feuds, intrigues, jealousies, and discontent. It is this fact which gives additional meaning to the Song of Songs. That unique book of Scripture is a sweet idyll in honour of pure and holy love. It sets before us in glowing imagery and tender rhythms how the lovely maiden of Shunem, undazzled by all the splendours and luxuries of the great king's court, unseduced by his gifts and his persistence, remained absolutely faithful to her humble shepherd lover, and, amid the gold and purple of the palace at Jerusalem, sighed for her simple home amid the groves of Lebanon. Surely she was as wise as fair, and her chances of happiness would be a thousandfold greater, her immunities from intolerable conditions a thousandfold more certain, as she wandered hand in hand with her shepherd youth amid pure scenes and in the vernal air, than amid the heavy exotic perfumes of a sensual and pampered court.

Perhaps in the word "princesses" we see some sort of excuse for that effeminating self-indulgence which would make the exhortations to simplicity and chastity in the Book of Proverbs sound very hollow on the lips of Solomon. It may have been worldly policy which originally led him to multiply his wives. The alliance with Pharaoh was secured by a marriage with his daughter, and possibly that with Hiram by the espousal of a Tyrian princess. The friendliness of Edom on the south, of Moab and Ammon on the east, of Sidon and the Hittites and Syria on the north, might be enhanced by matrimonial connexions from which the greater potentates might profit and of which the smaller sheykhs

were proud.[1] Yet if this were so, the policy, like all other worldly policy unsanctioned by the law of God, was very unsuccessful. Egypt as usual proved herself to be a broken reed. The Hittites only preserved a dream and legend of their olden power. Edom and Moab neither forgot nor abandoned their implacable and immemorial hatred. Syria became a dangerous rival awaiting the day of future triumphs. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes."

2. But the heathen religion of these strange women from so many nations "turned away the heart of Solomon after other gods." It may be doubted whether Solomon had ever read the stern prohibitions against intermarriage with the Canaanite nations which now stand on the page of the Pentateuch. If so he broke them, for the Hittites and the Phœnicians were Canaanites. Marriages with Egyptians, Moabites, and Edomites had not been, in so many words, forbidden, but the feeling of later ages applied the rule analogously to them. The result proved how necessary the law was. When Solomon was old his heart was no longer proof against feminine wiles. He was not old in years, for this was some time before his death, and when he died he was little more than sixty. But a polygamous despot gets old before his time.

The attempt made by Ewald and others to gloss over Solomon's apostasy as a sign of a large-hearted tolerance is an astonishing misreading of history.

[1] The Vatican MS. of the LXX. adds Syrian and Amorite princesses to the number. Marriages with Sidonians and Hittites are expressly forbidden in Exod. xxxiv. 12-16, and with Canaanites in Deut. vii. 3 (comp. Ezra ix. 2 and Neh. xiii. 23).

Tolerance for harmless divergences of opinion there should always be, though it is only a growth of modern days; but tolerance for iniquity is a wrong to holiness.

The worship of these devils adored for deities was stained with the worst passions which degrade human nature. They were themselves the personification of perverted instincts. The main facts respecting them are collected in Selden's famous *De Dis Syris Syntagma*, and Milton has enshrined them in his stateliest verse:—

> "First Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
> Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears: . .
> Next, Chemos, the obscene dread of Moab's sons,
> Peor his other name, when he enticed
> Israel in Sittim, on their march from Nile,
> To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
> Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarged
> Even to that hill of scandal, by the Grove
> Of Moloch homicide; lust, hard by hate:
> Till good Josiah drove them thence to hell.
> . With these in troop
> Came Ashtoreth, whom the Phœnicians call
> Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent horns;
> To whose bright image nightly by the moon
> Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs;
> In Sion also not unsung, where stood
> Her temple on the offensive mountain, built
> By that uxorious king, whose heart, though large,
> Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell
> To idols foul."

What tolerance should there be for idols whose service was horrible infanticide and shameless lust? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" How vile the worship of Chemosh was, Israel had already experienced in the wilderness where he was called

Peor.[1] What Moloch was they were to learn thereafter by many a horrible experience. Had Solomon never heard that the Lord God was a jealous God, and would not tolerate the rivalries of gods of fire and of lust? At least he was not afraid to desecrate one, if not two, of the summits of the Mount of Olives with shrines to these monstrous images, which seem to have been left "on that opprobrious mount" for many an age, so that they "durst abide"

> "Jehovah, thundering out of Sion, throned
> Between the cherubim; yea, often placed
> Within His sanctuary itself their shrines,
> Abominations, and with cursed things
> His holy rites and solemn feasts profaned,
> And with their darkness durst affront His light."

And, to crown all, Solomon not only showed this guilty complaisance to *all* his strange wives, but even, sinking into the lowest abyss of apostasy, "burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

"He that built a temple for himself and for Israel in Sion," says Bishop Hall, "built a temple for Chemoch in the Mount of Scandal for his mistresses in the very face of God's house. Because Solomon feeds them in their superstition, he draws the sin home to himself, and is branded for what he should have forbidden."

[1] Numb. xxv. 3.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WIND AND THE WHIRLWIND.

1 KINGS xi. 14—41.

"He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."—GAL. vi. 8.

SUCH degeneracy could not show itself in the king without danger to his people. "*Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.*" In the disintegration of Solomon's power and the general disenchantment from the glamour of his magnificence, the land became full of corruption and discontent. The wisdom and experience of the aged were contemptuously hissed off the seat of judgment by the irreverent folly of the young. The existence of a corrupt aristocracy is always a bad symptom of national disease. These "lisping hawthorn-buds" of fashion only bourgeon in tainted soil. The advice given by the "young men" who had "grown up with Rehoboam and stood before him" shows the insolence preceding doom which had been bred by the idolism of tyranny in the hearts of silly youths who had ceased to care for the wrongs of the people or to know anything about their condition. Violence, oppression, and commercial dishonesty, as we see in the Book of Proverbs, had been bred by the mad desire for gain; and even in the streets of holy

Jerusalem, and under the shadow of its Temple, "strange women," introduced by the commerce with heathen countries and the attendants on heathen princesses, lured to their destruction the souls of simple and God-forgetting youths.[1] The simple and joyous agricultural prosperity in which the sons of the people grew up as young plants and their daughters as the polished corners of the Temple was replaced by struggling discontent and straining competition. And amid all these evils the voices of the courtly priests were silent, and for a long time, under the menacing and irresponsible dominance of an oracular royalty, there was no prophet more.

Early in Solomon's reign two adversaries had declared their existence, but only became of much account in the darker and later days of its decline.[2]

One of these was Hadad, Prince of Edom. Upon the Edomites in the days of David the prowess of Joab had inflicted an overwhelming and all but exterminating reverse. Joab had remained six months in the conquered district to bury his comrades who had been slain in the terrible encounter, and to extirpate as far as possible the detested race. But the king's servants had been able to save Hadad, then but a little child, from the indiscriminate massacre, as the sole survivor

[1] See Prov. ii. 10-22, v. 1-14, vi. 24-35, etc. (contrast Psalm cxliv. 12-15).

[2] In 1 Kings xi. 9-25 the mischief inflicted by Rezon and Hadad is represented as a punishment for Solomon's apostasy. It has been said that here "the pragmatism belongs to the redactor," because these enemies sprang into existence when he came to the throne. But, as I have here represented it, nothing seems more probable than that Rezon and Hadad were practically impotent to inflict much damage before the period of Solomon's decline. (Verse 23 is omitted in some MSS. of the LXX.)

of his house.[1] The young Edomite prince was conveyed by them through Midian and the desert of Paran into Egypt, and there, for political reasons, had been kindly received by the Pharaoh of the day, probably Pinotem I. of the Tanite dynasty, the father of Psinaces whose alliance Solomon had secured by marriage with his daughter. Pinotem not only welcomed the fugitive Edomite as the last scion of a kingly race, but even deigned to bestow on him the hand of the sister of Tahpenes, his own *Gebira* or queen-mother.[2] Their son Genubath was brought up among the Egyptian princes. But amid the luxurious splendours of Pharaoh's palace Hadad carried in his heart an undying thirst for vengeance on the destroyer of his family and race. The names of David and Joab inspired a terror which made rebellion impossible for a time; but when Hadad heard, with grim satisfaction, of Joab's judicial murder, and that David had been succeeded by a peaceful son, no charm of an Egyptian palace and royal bride could weigh in the balance against the fierce passion of an avenger of blood. Better the wild freedom of Idumea than the sluggish ease of Egypt. He asked the Pharaoh's leave to return to his own country, and, braving the reproach of ingratitude, made his way back to the desolated fields and cities of his unfortunate people.[3] He developed their resources, and nursed

[1] An isolated anecdote of the exterminating war is preserved in 1 Chron. xi. 22, 23, from which it would seem that Egypt had interfered in favour of Edom.

[2] Renan conjectures that the real Egyptian name is Ahotepnes. The LXX. wrongly calls this Pharaoh Sheshonk (Σουσακείμ), who came later, and whose queen's name was Karaăma (not Thekemina, as the LXX. says).

[3] Canon Rawlinson (*Speaker's Commentary, ad loc.*) points out that fugitives once received at Eastern courts found it very difficult to

their hopes of the coming day of vengeance. If he could do nothing else he could at least act as a desperate marauder, and prove himself a "satan" to the successor of his foe.[1] Solomon was strong enough to keep open the road to Ezion-Gebir, but Hadad was probably master of Sela and Maon.[2]

Another enemy was Rezon, of whom but little is known. David had won a great victory, the most remarkable of all his successes, over Hadadezer, King of Zobah, and had then signalised his conquest by placing garrisons in Syria of Damascus. On this occasion Rezon, the son of Eli, who is perhaps identical with Hezion, the grandfather of Benhadad, King of Syria in the days of Asa, fled from the host of Hadadezer with some of the Syrian forces. With these and all whom he could collect about him, he became a guerilla captain. After a successful period of predatory warfare he found himself strong enough to seize Damascus, where, to all appearance, he founded a powerful hereditary kingdom. Thus with Hadad in the south to plunder his commercial caravans, and Rezon on the north to threaten his communication with Tiphsah, and alarm his excursions to his pleasances in Lebanon, Solomon was made keenly to feel that his power was rather an unsubstantial pageant than a solid dominion.

The enmity of these powerful Emirs of Edom and

get away, *e.g.*, Democedes, Herod., iii. 132-37. Histiæus, in leaving the court of Persia, has expressly to say that he had lacked nothing—τεῦ δὲ ἐνδεὴς ὤν; Herod., v. 106; comp. 1 Kings xi. 22.

[1] 1 Kings xi. 14: "The Lord stirred up an *adversary*" (שָׂטָן).

[2] Stade, i. 302. In 1 Kings xi. 22, 25 the text is corrupt. Verse 25 should partly be transferred to the end of verse 22, and should run, "And Hadad returned to his own land," *i.e.*, to *Edom*. (Edom has been confused with "Aram.")

Syria was an hereditary legacy from the wars of David and the ruthless savagery of Joab. A third adversary was far more terrible, and he was called into existence by the conduct of Solomon himself. This was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. In himself he was of no account, being a man of isolated position and obscure origin. He was the son of a widow named Zeruah,[1] who lived at Zarthan in the Jordan valley. The position of a widow in the ancient world was one of feebleness and difficulty; and if we may trust the apocryphal additions to the Septuagint, Zeruah was not only a widow but a harlot. But Jeroboam, whose name perhaps indicates that he was born in the golden days of Solomon's prosperity, was a youth of vigour and capacity. He made his way from the wretched clay fields of Zeredah to Jerusalem, and there became one of the vast undistinguished gang who were known as "slaves of Solomon." The *corvée* of many thousands from all parts of Palestine was then engaged in building the *Millo* and the huge walls and causeway in the valley between Zion and Moriah, which was afterwards known as the Valley of the Cheesemongers (*Tyropœon*). Here the unknown youth distinguished himself by his strenuousness, and by the influence which he rapidly acquired. Solomon knew the value of a man "diligent in his business," and therefore worthy to stand before kings. Untrammelled by any rules of seniority, and able to make and unmake as he thought fit, Solomon promoted him while still young, and at one bound, to a position of great rank and influence. Jeroboam was an Ephraimite, and

[1] The additions to the LXX. call her Sarira. But the names "Sarira," "Enlamite," "Ano" are all suspicious; and possibly the LXX. additions may be only part of some Alexandrian Haggadah.

Solomon therefore "gave him charge over all the compulsory levies (*Mas*) of the tribe of the house of Joseph"—that is, of the proud and powerful tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who practically represented all Israel except Judah, Benjamin, and the almost nominal Simeon.

The spark of ambition was now kindled in the youth's heart, and as he toiled among the workmen he became aware of two secrets of deadly import to the master who had lifted him out of the dust—secrets which he well knew how to use. One was that a deep undercurrent of tribal jealousy was setting in with the force of a tide. Solomon had unduly favoured his own tribe by exemptions from the general requisition, and Ephraim fretted under a sense of wrong. That proud tribe, the heir of Joseph's pre-eminence, had never acquiesced in the loss of the hegemony which it so long had held. From Ephraim had sprung Joshua, the mighty successor of Moses, the conqueror of the Promised Land, and his sepulchre was still among them at Timnath-Serah. From their kith had sprung the princely Gideon, the greatest of the judges, who might, had he so chosen, have anticipated the foundation of royalty in Israel. Shiloh, which God had chosen for His inheritance, was in their domains. It required very little at any time to make the Ephraimites second the cry of the insurgents who followed Sheba, the son of Bichri,—

"We have no part in David,
Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.
Every man to his tents, O Israel."

Jeroboam, who was now by Solomon's favour a chief ruler over his fellow-tribesmen, had many opportunities to foment this jealousy, and to win for himself by

personal graciousness the popularity of Solomon which had so long begun to wane.

But a yet deeper feeling was at work against Solomon. The men of Ephraim and all the northern tribes had not only begun to ask why Judah was to monopolise the king's partiality, but the much more dangerous question, What right has the king to enforce on us these dreary and interminable labours, in making a city of palaces and an impregnable fortress of a capital which is to overshadow our glory and command our subjection? With consummate astuteness, by a word here and a word there, Jeroboam was able to pose before Solomon as the enforcer of a stern yoke, and before his countrymen as one who hated the hard necessity and would fain be their deliverer from it.

And while he was already in heart a rebel against the House of David, he received what he regarded as a Divine sanction to his career of ambition.

The prophets, as we have seen, had sunk to silence before the oracular autocrat who so frequently impressed on the people that there is "a Divine sentence on the lips of kings." No special inspiration seemed to be needed either to correct or to corroborate so infallible a wisdom. But the heaven-enkindled spark of inspiration can never be permanently suffocated. Priests as a body have often proved amenable to royal seductions, but individual prophets are irrepressible.

What were the priests doing in the face of so fearful an apostasy? Apparently nothing. They seem to have sunk into comfortable acquiescence, satisfied with the augmentation of rank and revenue which the Temple and its offerings brought to them. They offered no opposition to the extravagances of the king, his violations of the theocratic ideal, or even his monstrous

tolerance for the worship of idols. That prophets as a body existed in Judah during the early years of this reign there is no proof. The atmosphere was ill-suited to their vocation. Nathan probably had died long before Solomon reached his zenith.[1] Of Iddo we know almost nothing. Two prophets are mentioned, but only towards the close of the reign—Ahijah of Shiloh,[2] and Shemaiah; and there seems to have been some confusion in the *rôles* respectively assigned to them[3] by later tradition.

But the hour had now struck for a prophet to speak the word of the Lord. If the king, surrounded by formidable guards and a glittering court, was too exalted to be reached by a humble son of the people, it was time for Ahijah to follow the precedent of Samuel. He obeyed a divine intimation in selecting the successor who should punish the great king's rebellion against God, and inaugurate a rule of purer obedience than now existed under the upas-shadow of the throne. He was the *Mazkîr*, the annalist or historiographer of Solomon's court (2 Chron. ix. 29); but loyalty to a backsliding king had come to mean disloyalty to God. There was but one man who seemed marked out for the perilous honour of a throne. It was the brave, vigorous, ambitious youth of Ephraim who had risen to

[1] In 2 Chron. ix. 29 the LXX. reads "Joel." He wrote "visions" against Jeroboam, a life of Ahijah, and a book "on (or after the manner of) genealogies" (2 Chron. ix. 29, xii. 15, xiii. 22). Jerome (on 2 Chron. xv. 1) identifies him with Oded.

[2] 2 Chron. ix. 29. Perhaps 1 Kings xi. may be borrowed from the historic records of Ahijah.

[3] For in the LXX. 1 Kings xi. 29-39 is absent in some MSS., as well as 1 Kings xiv. (Ahijah and Abijah), which has been added from the Greek version of Aquila. In verse 29, for "Ahijah the Shilonite" we have in some MSS. of the LXX. "Shemaiah the Elamite" or "Enlamite."

high promotion and had won the hearts of his people, though Solomon had made him the task-master of their forced labour. On one occasion Jeroboam left Jerusalem, perhaps to visit his native Zeredah and his widowed mother.[1] Ahijah intentionally met him on the road. He drew him aside from the public path into a solitary place. There, seen by none, he took off his own shoulders the new stately *abba*[2] in which he had clad himself, and proceeded to give to Jeroboam one of those object-lessons in the form of an acted parable, which to the Eastern mind are more effective than any words.[3] Rending the new garment into twelve pieces, he gave ten to Jeroboam, telling him that Jehovah would thus rend the kingdom from the hands of Solomon because of his unfaithfulness, leaving his son but one tribe[4] that the lamp of David might not be utterly extinguished. Jeroboam should be king over Israel; to the House of David should be left but an insignificant fragment. God would build a sure house for Jeroboam as He had done for David, if he would keep His com-

[1] 1 Kings xi. 29, addition of LXX.

[2] The square cloth worn over the other dress, and now called *abba*, seems to represent the *salemâh* (שַׂלְמָה) here mentioned.

[3] The story is usually made to apply to *Jeroboam's* new robe; but in the addition to the LXX., where the action is ascribed to Shemaiah, the word of the Lord says to him, λάβε σεαυτῷ ἱμάτιον καινὸν τὸ οὐκ εἰσελήλυθὸς εἰς ὕδωρ κ. τ. λ. The method of "acted parables" was common among the Hebrew prophets (See Jer. xiii., xix., xxvii.; Ezek. iii., iv. v., etc.); but this is the earliest recorded instance of the kind.

[4] Not "two tribes," as the LXX. says. But neither the number 1 nor the number 2 are literally exact, for certainly Jeroboam did not command the territory of Simeon, south of Judah. The adherence of Benjamin, or part of Benjamin, to Judah was mainly a geographical accident, due to the fact that Jerusalem lay in both tribes (Josh. xv. 8, xviii. 16; Jer. xx. 2). Late in David's reign a Benjamite (Sheba, son of Bichri) had headed a revolt against David (2 Sam. xx. 1).

mandments, though the House of David "should not be afflicted for ever."[1]

A scene so memorable, a prophecy of such grave significance, could hardly remain a secret. Ahijah may have hinted it among his sympathisers. Jeroboam would hardly be able to conceal from his friends the immense hopes which it excited; and as his position probably gave him the command of troops he became dangerous. His designs reached the ears of Solomon, and he sought to put Jeroboam to death. The young man, who had probably betrayed his secret ambition, and may even have attempted some premature and abortive insurrection, escaped from Jerusalem, and took refuge in Egypt. There the Bubastite dynasty had displaced the Tanite, and from Shishak I., the earliest Pharaoh whose individuality eclipsed the common dynastic name, he received so warm a welcome that, according to one story, Shishak gave him in marriage Ano, the elder sister of his Queen Tahpanes (or Thekemina, LXX.) and of Hadad's wife.[2] He stayed in Egypt till the death of Solomon, and then returned to Zeredah, either in consequence of the summons of his countrymen, or that he might be ready for any turn of events.

Under such melancholy circumstances the last great king of the united kingdom passed away. Of the circumstances of his death we are told nothing, but the clouds had gathered thickly round his declining years.

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[1] 1 Kings xi. 34-39.

[2] The story occurs in the additions to the LXX., and is highly improbable. Shishak came to the throne, according to R. S. Poole, about B.C. 972; others date his accession in 975 or 988. No such name as Tahpanes or Thekemina is found in the Egyptian records, and the wife of Shishak was Karaâmat.

"The power to which he had elevated Israel," says the Jewish historian Grätz, "resembled that of a magic world built up by spirits. The spell was broken at his death." It must not, however, be imagined that no abiding results had followed from so remarkable a rule. The nation which he left behind him at his death was very different from the nation to whose throne he had succeeded as a youth. It had sprung from immature boyhood to the full-grown stature of manhood. If the purity of its spiritual ideal had been somewhat corrupted, its intellectual growth and its material power had been immensely stimulated. It had tasted the sweets of commerce, and never forgot the richness of that intoxicating draught which was destined in later ages to transform its entire nature. Tribal distinctions, if not obliterated, had been subordinated to a central organisation. The knowledge of writing had been more widely spread, and this had led to the dawn of that literature which saved Israel from oblivion, and uplifted her to a place of supreme influence among the nations. Manners had been considerably softened from their old wild ferocity. The more childish forms of ancient superstition, such as the use of ephods and teraphim, had fallen into desuetude. The worship of Jehovah, and the sense of His unique supremacy over the whole world, was fostered in many hearts, and men began to feel the unfitness of giving to Him that name of "Baal" which began henceforth to be confined to the Syrian sun-god.[1] Amid many aberrations the sense of religion was deepened among the faithful of

[1] Compare the names Eshbaal, Meribaal, Jerubbaal, Baaljada, with Ishjo (LXX. 1 Sam. xiv. 49, Heb.), Mephibosheth Eliada. In later days Baal was changed into the nickname *Bosheth*, "shame": hence Ishbosheth, Jerubesheth, Mephibosheth. See Kittel, ii. 87.

Israel, and the ground was prepared for the more spiritual religion which in later reigns found its immortal expositors in those Hebrew prophets who rank foremost among the teachers of mankind.[1]

But as for Solomon himself it is a melancholy thought that he is one of the three or four of whose salvation the Fathers and others have openly ventured to doubt.[2] The discussion of such a question is, indeed, wholly absurd and profitless, and is only here alluded to in order to illustrate the completeness of Solomon's fall. As the Book of Ecclesiastes is certainly not by him it can throw no light on the moods of his latter days, unless it be conceivable that it represents some faint breath of olden tradition. The early commentators acquitted or condemned him as though they sat on the judgment-seat of the Almighty. They would have shown more wisdom if they had admitted that such decisions are—fortunately for all men—beyond the scope of human judges. Happily for us God, not man, is the judge, and He looks down on earth

> "With larger other eyes than ours
> To make allowance for us all."

Orcagna was wiser when, in his great picture in the Campo Santo at Pisa and in the Strozzi Chapel at Florence, he represented Solomon rising out of his sepulchre in robe and crown at the trump of the archangel, uncertain whether he is to turn to the right hand or to the left.

And Dante, as all men know, joins Solomon in Paradise with the Four Great Schoolmen. The great mediæval poet of Latin Christianity did not side with

[1] See Kittel, *Gesch. der Hebr.*, ii. 169-76.
[2] See Buddæus, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 237.

St. Augustine and the Latin Fathers against the wise king, but with St. Chrysostom and the Greek Fathers for him. He did so because he accepted St. Bernard's mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs:—

"La quinta luce, ch'è tra noi più bella
Spira di tale amor, che tutto il mondo
Laggiù ne gola di saver novella.
Entro v'è l'alta mente, u' sì profondo
Saver fu messo, che si il vero è vero,
A veder tanto non surse il secondo." [1]

There is a famous legend in the Qur'an about the death of Solomon.[2]

"Work ye righteousness O ye family of David; for I see that which ye do. And we made the wind subject unto Solomon. . . And we made a fountain of molten brass to flow for him. And some of the genii were obliged to work in his presence by the will of his Lord. They made for him whatever he pleased of palaces, and statues, and large dishes like fishponds, and caldrons standing firm on their trivets; and we said, Work righteousness, O family of David, with thanksgiving; for few of my servants are thankful. And when we had decreed that Solomon should die, nothing discovered his death unto them, except the creeping thing of the earth that gnawed his staff. And when his body fell down, the genii plainly perceived that if they had

[1] "The fifth light shining with a beauty pure
Breathes from such love that all the world below
Craves to have tidings of him true and sure.
Within it is the lofty mind, where so
Deep knowledge dwelt, that, if the truth be true,
Such insight ne'er a second rose to know."
Parad., x. 109-114, and Dean Plumtre's notes.

[2] Qur'an, xxxiv. 10; Chapter of Sebâ (Palmer's translation, p. 151).

known that which is secret they had not continued in a vile punishment."[1]

The legend briefly alluded to was that Solomon employed the genii to build his Temple, but, foreseeing that he would die before its completion, he prayed God to conceal his death from them, so that they might go on working. His prayer was heard, and the rest of the legend may best be told in the words of a poet:[2]—

"King Solomon stood in his crown of gold,
Between the pillars, before the altar
In the House of the Lord. And the king was old,
And his strength began to falter,
So that he leaned on his ebony staff,
Sealed with the seal of the Pentegraph.

. . .

And the king stood still as a carven king,
The carven cedar beams below,
In his purple robe, with his signet-ring,
And his beard as white as snow.
And his face to the Oracle, where the hymn
Dies under the wings of the cherubim.

. .

And it came to pass as the king stood there,
And looked on the House he had built with pride,
That the hand of the Lord came unaware
And touched him, so that he died
In his purple robe and his signet ring
And the crown wherewith they had crowned him king.

And the stream of folk that came and went
To worship the Lord with prayer and praise,
Went softly ever in wonderment,
For the king stood there always;
And it was solemn and strange to behold
The dead king crowned with a crown of gold.

. . . .

[1] Sale's Koran, ii. 287; Palmer's Qur'an, ii. 152.
[2] The Earl of Lytton.

So King Solomon stood up dead in the House
Of the Lord, held there by the Pentegraph,
Until out from the pillar there ran a red mouse,
And gnawed through his ebony staff;
Then flat on his face the king fell down,
And they picked from the dust a golden crown."

The legends of the East describe Solomon as tormented indeed, yet not without hope. In the romance of Vathek he is described as listening earnestly to the roar of a cataract, because when it ceases to roar his anguish will be at an end.

"The king so renowned for his wisdom was on the loftiest elevation, and placed immediately beneath the Dome. 'The thunder,' he said, 'precipitated me hither, where, however, I do not remain totally destitute of hope; for an angel of light hath revealed that, in consideration of the piety of my early youth, my woes shall come to an end. Till then I am in torments, ineffable torments; an unrelenting fire preys on my heart.' The caliph was ready to sink with terror when he heard the groans of Solomon. Having uttered this exclamation, Solomon raised his hands towards heaven, in token of supplication; and the caliph discerned through his bosom, which was transparent as crystal, his heart enveloped in flames."

So Solomon passed away—the last king of all Palestine till another king arose a thousand years later, like him in his fondness for magnificence, like him in his tamperings with idolatry, like him in being the builder of the Temple, but in all other respects a far more grievous sinner and a far more inexcusable tyrant —Herod, falsely called "The Great."

And in the same age arose another King of Solomon's descendants, whose palace was the shop of the carpenter and His throne the cross, and whose mortal body was the true Temple of the Supreme—that King whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion endureth throughout all ages.

BOOK III.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM.

B.C. 937—889.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NEW REIGN.

1 KINGS xii. 1—5.

"A foolish son is the calamity of his father."—PROV. xix. 13.

"He left behind him Roboam, even the foolishness of the people, and one that had no understanding."—ECCLUS. xlvii. 23.

REHOBOAM, who was Solomon's only son, succeeded in Jerusalem without opposition, B.C. 937.[1] But the northern tribes were in no mood to regard as final the prerogative acceptance of the son of Solomon by the rival tribe of Judah. (David had won them by his vivid personality; Solomon had dazzled them by his royal magnificence.) It did not follow that they were blindly to accept a king who emerged for the first time from the shadow of the harem, and was the son of an Ammonitess, who worshipped Chemosh. Instead of going to Rehoboam at Jerusalem as the tribes had gone to David at Hebron, they summoned an assembly at their ancient city of Shechem, on the site of the modern Nablûs, between Mount Ebal and Gerizim. In this fortress-sanctuary they determined, as "men of Israel," to bring their grievances under the notice of the new sovereign before they formally ratified his

[1] "Rehoboam" means "enlarger of the people" (comp. Eurudemos); Jeroboam, "whose people is many" (Poludemos; comp. Thiodric, Thierry). But Cheyne makes it mean "the kingdom contendeth" (Kleinert, *Volkstreiter*).

succession. According to one view they summoned Jeroboam, who had already returned to Zeredah, to be their spokesman.[1] When the assembly met they told the king that they would accept him if he would lighten the grievous service which his father had put upon them.[2] Rehoboam, taken by surprise, said that they should receive his answer in "three days." In the interval he consulted the aged counsellors of his father. Their answer was astute in its insight into human nature. It resembled the "long promises, short performance" which Guido da Montefeltro recommended to Pope Boniface VIII. in the case of the town of Penestrino.[3] They well understood the maxim of "*omnia serviliter pro imperio*," which has paved the way to power of many a usurper from Otho to Bolingbroke. "Give the people a civil answer," they said; "tell them that *you* are *their* servant. Content with this they will be scattered to their homes, and you will bind them to your yoke for ever." In an answer so deceptive, but so immoral, the corrupting influence of the Solomonian autocracy is as conspicuous as in that of the malapert youths who made their appeal to the king's conceit.

"Who knoweth whether his son will be a wise man

[1] So we read in the LXX. Cod. Vat., and (partly) in the Vulgate (see Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament*, p. 117). Unless Jeroboam had spontaneously returned from Egypt on hearing of the death of Solomon, there would hardly have been time to summon him thence. 2 Chron. x. 2 represents the matter thus. Possibly his name has crept by error into 1 Kings xii. 3. See Wellhausen-Bleek's *Einleitung*, p. 243.

[2] In the LXX. the Ephraimites complain of the expensive provision for Solomon's table. "Thy father made his yoke grievous upon us, and made grievous to us the meats of his table." LXX. (Cod. Vat.), *καὶ ἐβάρυνε τὰ βρώματα τῆς τραπέζης αὐτοῦ.*

[3] Dante, *Inferno*, Cant. xxvii.

or a fool?" asks Solomon in the Book of Proverbs. Apparently he had done little or nothing to save his only son from being the latter. Despots in polygamous households, whether in Palestine or Zululand, live in perpetual dread of their own sons, and generally keep them in absolute subordination. If Rehoboam had received the least political training, or had been possessed of the smallest common sense, he would have been able to read the signs of the times sufficiently well to know that everything might be lost by blustering arrogance, and everything gained by temporising plausibility. Had Rehoboam been a man like David, or even like Saul in his better day, he might have grappled to himself the affections of his people as with hooks of steel by seizing the opportunity of abating their burdens, and offering them a sincere assurance that he would study their peace and welfare above all. Had he been a man of ordinary intelligence, he would have seen that the present was not the moment to exacerbate a discontent which was already dangerous. But the worldly-wise counsel of the "elders" of Solomon was utterly distasteful to a man who, after long insignificance, had just begun to feel the vertigo of autocracy. His sense of his right was strong in exact proportion to his own worthlessness. He turned to the young men who had grown up with him, and who stood before him—the *jeunesse dorée* of a luxurious and hypocritical epoch, the aristocratic idlers in whom the insolent self-indulgence of an enervated society had expelled the old spirit of simple faithfulness.[1] Their answer was the sort of answer which Buckingham and

[1] They are called *yeladim*, which surely cannot apply to men of forty, so that Rehoboam was probably little more than a youth, *na'ar* (2 Chron. xiii. 7; comp. Gen. xxxiii. 13).

Sedley might have suggested to Charles II. in face of the demands of the Puritans; and it was founded on notions of inherent prerogative, and "the right Divine of kings to govern wrong," such as the Bishops might have instilled into James I. at the Hampton Court Conference, or Archbishop Laud into Charles I. in the days of "Thorough."

"Threaten this insolent canaille," they said, "with your royal severity. Tell them that you do not intend to give up your sacred right to enforced labour, such as your brother of Egypt has always enjoyed.[1] Tell them that your little finger shall be thicker than your father's loins,[2] and that instead of his whips you will chastise them with leaded thongs.[3] That is the way to show yourself every inch a king."

The insensate advice of these youths proved itself attractive to the empty and infatuated prince. He accepted it in the dementation which is a presage of ruin; for, as the pious historian says, "the cause was from the Lord."

The announcement of this incredibly foolish reply woke in the men of Israel an answering shout of rebellion. In the rhythmic war-cry of Sheba, the son of Bichri, which had become proverbial,[4] they cried:—

"What portion have we in David?
Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel:
Now see to thine own house, David!"[5]

[1] Herod., ii. 124-28.

[2] "My little finger." Heb., "my littleness"; LXX., ἡ μικρότης μου. But the paraphrase is perfectly correct (Vulg., Pesh., Josephus, and the Rabbis).

[3] "Virga si est nodosa et aculeata scorpios vocatur, quia arcuato vulnere in corpus infigitur" (Isidor., *Orig.*, i. 175).

[4] 2 Sam. xx. 1.

[5] Or, "Now feed thine own house" (LXX., βόσκε, reading רעה for

Unable to appease the wild tumult, Rehoboam again showed his want of sense by sending an officer to the people whose position and personality were most sure to be offensive to them. He sent "Adoram, who was over the tribute"—the man who stood, before the Ephraimites especially, as the representative of everything in monarchical government which was to them most entirely odious. Josephus says that he hoped to mollify the indignant people. But it was too late. They stoned the aged *Al-ham-Mas* with stones that he died; and when the foolish king witnessed or heard of the fate of a man who had grown grey as the chief agent of despotism he felt that it was high time to look after his own safety. Apparently he had come with no other escort than that of the men of Judah who formed a part of the national militia. Of Cherethites, Pelethites, and Gittites we hear no more. The princeling of a despoiled and humiliated kingdom was perhaps in no condition to provide the pay of these foreign mercenaries. The king found that the name of David was no longer potent, and that royalty had lost its awful glamour. He made an effort[1] to reach his chariot, and, barely succeeding, fled with headlong speed to Jerusalem. From that day for ever the unity of Israel was broken, and "the twelve tribes" became a name for two mutually antagonistic powers.[2] The men of Israel at once chose Jeroboam for their king, and an event

(ראה); and the LXX. adds, "For this man is not (fit) to be a ruler, nor to be a prince." Evidently the revolt was the culmination of those jealousies which the haughty tribe of Ephraim had already manifested in the lives of Gideon, Abimelech, and David.

[1] Heb., "strengthened himself."

[2] In fact, the δωδεκάφυλον became more of a reminiscence than anything else. Simeon, for instance, practically disappeared (1 Chron. iv. 24-43).

was accomplished which had its effect on the history of all succeeding times. The only Israelites over whom the House of David continued to rule were those who, like the scattered remnant of Simeon, dwelt in the cities of Judah.[1]

Thus David's grandson found that his kingdom over a people had shrunk to the headship of a tribe, with a sort of nominal suzerainty over Edom and part of Philistia. He was reduced to the comparative insignificance of David's own position during his first seven years, when he was only king in Hebron. This disruption was the beginning of endless material disasters to both kingdoms; but it was the necessary condition of high spiritual blessings, for "it was of the Lord."

Politically it is easy to see that one cause of the revolt lay in the too great rapidity in which kings, who, as it was assumed, were to be elective, or at least to depend on the willing obedience of the people, had transformed themselves into hereditary despots. Judah might still accept the sway of a king of her own tribe; but the powerful and jealous Ephraimites, at the head of the Northern Confederation, refused to regard themselves as the destined footstool for a single family. As in the case of Saul and of David, they determined once more to accept no king who did not owe his sovereignty to their own free choice.

[1] 1 Kings xii. 17.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DISRUPTION.

1 KINGS xii. 6—20.

"*IT was of the Lord.*" It is no small proof of the insight and courageous faithfulness of the historian that he accepts without question the verdict of ancient prophecy that the disruption was God's doing; for everything which happened in the four subsequent centuries, alike in Judah and in Israel, seemed to belie this pious conviction. We, in the light of later history, are now able to see that the disseverance of Israel's unity worked out results of eternal advantage to mankind; but in the sixth century before Christ no event could have seemed to be so absolutely disastrous. It must have worn the aspect of an extinction of the glory of the House of Jacob. It involved the obliteration of the great majority of the descendants of the patriarchs, and the reduction of the rest to national insignificance and apparently hopeless servitude. Throughout those centuries of troubled history, in the struggle for existence which was the lot of both kingdoms alike, it was difficult to say whether their antagonism or their friendship, their open wars or their matrimonial alliances, were productive of the greater ruin. Each section of the nation fatally hampered and counterpoised the other with a perpetual rivalry and

menace. Ephraim envied Judah, and Judah vexed Ephraim. In extreme cases the south was ready to purchase the intervention of Syria, or even of Assyria, to check and overwhelm its northern rival, while the north could raise up Egypt or Edom to harass the southern kingdom with intolerable raids.

To us the Southern Kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, seems the more important and the more interesting division of the people. It became the heir of all the promises, the nurse of the Messianic hope, the mother of the four greater prophets, the continuer of all the subsequent history after the glory of Israel had been stamped out by Assyria for ever.

1. But such was not the aspect presented by the kingdom of Judah to contemporary observers. On the contrary, Judah seemed to be a paltry and accidental fragment—one tribe, dissevered from the magnificent unity of Israel. Nothing redeemed it from impotence and obliteration but the splendid possessions of Jerusalem and the Temple, which guaranteed the often threatened perpetuity of the House of David. The future seemed to be wholly with Israel when men compared the relative size and population of the disunited tribes. Judah comprised little more than the environs of Jerusalem. Except Jerusalem, Mizpeh, Gibeon, and Hebron, it had no famous shrines and centres of national traditions. It could not even claim the southern town of Beersheba as a secure possession.[1] The tribe of Simeon had melted away into a shadow, if not into non-existence, amid the

[1] In 1 Kings xix. 3 it is reckoned as belonging to Judah (comp. Josh. xv. 28), being really a town of Simeon (Josh. xix. 2); but from Amos v. 5, viii. 14, we should infer that it was at any rate largely frequented by Israelites.

surrounding populations, and its territory was under the kings of Judah; but they did not even possess the whole of Benjamin, and if that little tribe was nominally reckoned with them, it was only because part of their capital city was in Benjamite territory, to which belonged the valley of Hinnom. To Israel, on the other hand, pertained all the old local sanctuaries and scenes of great events. On the east of Jordan they held Mahanaim; on the west Jericho, near as it was to Jerusalem, and Bethel with its sacred stone of Jacob, and Gilgal with its memorial of the conquest, and Shechem the national place of assembly, and Accho and Joppa on the sea shore. Israel, too, inherited all the predominance over Moab and Ammon, and the Philistines, which had been secured by conquest in the reign of David.[1]

2. Then, again, the greatest heroes of tradition had been sons of the northern tribes. The fame of Joshua was theirs, of Deborah and Barak, of fierce Jephthah, of kingly Gideon, and of bold Abimelech. Holy Samuel, the leader of the prophets, and heroic Saul, the first of the kings, had been of their kith and kin. Judah could only claim the bright personality of David, and the already tarnished glories of Solomon, which men did not yet see through the mirage of legend but in the prosaic light of every day.

3. Again, the Northern Kingdom was unhampered by the bad example and erroneous development of the preceding royalty. Jeroboam had not stained his career with crimes like David; nor had he sunk, as Solomon had done, into polygamy and idolatry. It seemed unlikely that he, with so fatal an example

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 34; 2 Kings ii. 4.

before his eyes, could be tempted into oppressive tyranny, futile commerce, or luxurious ostentation. He could found a new dynasty, free from the trammels of a bad commencement, and as fully built on Divine command as that of the House of Jesse.

4. Nor was it a small advantage that the new kingdom had an immense superiority over its southern compeer in richness of soil and beauty of scenery. To it belonged the fertile plain of Jezreel, rolling with harvests of golden grain. Its command of Accho gave it access to the treasures of the shore and of the sea. To it belonged the purple heights of Carmel, of which the very name meant "a garden of God"; and the silver Lake of Galilee, with its inexhaustible swarms of fish; and the fields of Gennesareth, which were a wonder of the world for their tropical luxuriance. Theirs also were the lilied waters and paper-reeds of Merom, and the soft, green, park-like scenery of Gerizim, and the roses of Sharon, and the cedars of Lebanon, and the vines and fig trees and ancient terebinths of all the land of Ephraim, and the forest glades of Zebulon and Naphtali, and the wild uplands beyond the Jordan—which were all far different from the "awful barrenness" of Judah, with its monotony of rounded hills.[1]

5. Under these favourable conditions three great advantages were exceptionally developed in the Northern Kingdom.

(1) It evidently enjoyed a larger freedom as well as a greater prosperity. How gay and bright, how festive and musical, how worldly and luxurious, was the life of the wealthy and the noble in the ivory palaces and

[1] See Stanley, *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, ii. 269-71.

on the gorgeous divans of Samaria and Jezreel, as we read of it in the pages of the contemporary prophets![1] Naboth and Shemer show themselves as independent of tyranny as any sturdy dalesman or feudal noble, and "the great lady of Shunem, on the slopes of Esdraelom, in her well-known home, is a sample of Israelite life in the north as true as that of the reaper Boaz in the south. She leaves her home under the pressure of famine, and goes down to the plains of Philistia. When she returns and finds a stranger in her corn-fields, she insists on restitution, even at the hand of the king himself."[2]

(2) The Ten Tribes also developed a more brilliant literature. Some of the most glowing psalms are probably of northern origin, as well as the Song of Deborah, and the work of the writer who is now generally recognised by critics under the name of the Deuteronomist. The loveliest poem produced by Jewish literature—the Song of Songs—bears on every page the impress of the beautiful and imaginative north. The fair girl of Shunem loves her leopard-haunted hills, and the vernal freshness of her northern home, more than the perfumed chambers of Solomon's seraglio; and her poet is more charmed with the lustre and loveliness of Tirzah than with the palaces and Temple of Jerusalem. The Book of Job may have originated in the Northern Kingdom, from which also sprang the best historians of the Jewish race.[3]

(3) But the main endowment of the new kingdom consisted in the magnificent development and independence of the prophets.

[1] Amos v. 11, vi. 4-6.

[2] 2 Kings iv. 18, 22, viii. 1-6; Stanley, ii. 271.

[3] See Ewald, iv. 9 (E. T.).

It was not till after the overthrow of the Ten Tribes that the glory of prophecy migrated southwards, and Jerusalem produced the mighty triad of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. For the two and a half centuries that the Northern Kingdom lasted scarcely one prophet is heard of in Judah except the scarcely known Hanani, and Eliezer, the son of Mareshah,[1] who is little more than a *nominis umbra.* To the north belongs the great herald-prophet of the Old Dispensation, the mighty Elijah; the softer spirit of the statesman-prophet Elisha; the undaunted Micaiah, son of Imlah; the picturesque Micah; the historic Jonah; the plaintive Hosea; and that bold and burning patriot, a fragment of whose prophecy now forms part of the Book of Zechariah. Amos, indeed, belonged by birth to Tekoa, which was in Judah, but his prophetic activity was confined to Bethel and Jezreel. The Schools of the Prophets at Ramah, Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal were all in Israel. The passages in the third section of the Book of Zechariah are alone sufficient to show how vast was the influence in the affairs of the nation of the prophets of the north, and how fearless their intervention. Even when they were most fiercely persecuted, they were not afraid to beard the most powerful kings—an Ahab and a Jeroboam II.—in all their pride.[2] Samaria and Galilee were rich in prophetic lives; and they, too, were the destined scene of the life of Him of whom all the prophets prophesied, and from whose inspiration they drew their heavenly fire.

Against these advantages, however, must be set two serious and ultimately fatal drawbacks—germs of disease which lay in the very constitution of the kingdom, and from the first doomed it to death.

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 37. [2] Zech. xi. 4-17, xiii. 7-9.

One of these was the image-worship, of which I shall speak in a later section; the other was the lack of one predominant and continuous dynasty.

The royalty of the north did not spring up through long years of gradual ascendency, and could not originally appeal to splendid services and heroic memories. Jeroboam was a man of humble, and, if tradition says truly, of tainted origin. He was not a usurper, for he was called to the throne by the voice of prophecy and the free spontaneous choice of his people; but in Solomon's days he had been a potential if not an actual rebel. He set the example of successful revolt, and it was eagerly followed by many a soldier and general of similar antecedents. In the short space of two hundred and forty-five years there were no less than nine changes of dynasty, of which those of Jeroboam, Baasha, Kobolam,[1] Menahem, consisted only of a father and son. There were at least four isolated or partial kings: Zimri, Tibni, Pekah, and Hosea. Only two dynasties, those of Omri and Jehu, succeeded in maintaining themselves for even four or five generations, and they, like the others, were at last quenched in blood. The close of the kingdom in its usurpations, massacres, and catastrophes reminds us of nothing so much as the disastrous later days of the Roman Empire, when the purple was so often rent by the dagger-thrust, and it was rare for emperors to die a natural death. The kingdom which had risen from a sea of blood set in the same red waves.

[1] If we may regard Kobolam as a real person (2 Kings xv. 10, LXX.). Thus, in the Northern Kingdom twenty kings belong to *nine* different dynasties in two hundred and forty-five years; and in the Southern only nineteen kings of *one* dynasty rule for three hundred and forty-five years.

On the other hand, whatever may have been the drawback of the small and hampered Southern Kingdom, it had several conspicuous advantages. It had a settled and incomparable capital, which could be rendered impregnable against all ordinary assaults; while the capital of the Northern Kingdom shifted from Shechem to Penuel[1] and Tirzah, and from Tirzah to Samaria and Jezreel. It had the blessing of a loyal people, and of the all-but-unbroken continuity of one loved and cherished dynasty for nearly four centuries. It had the yet greater blessing of producing not a few kings who more or less fully attained to the purity of the theocratic ideal. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, were good and high-minded kings, and the two latter were religious reformers. Whatever may have been the sins and shortcomings of Judah—and they were often very heinous—still the prophets bear witness that her transgressions were less incurable than those of her sister Samaria. All good men began to look to Jerusalem as the nursing mother of the Promised Deliverer. "Out of Judah," said the later Zechariah, "shall come forth the corner stone, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every governor together."[2] Amos was born in Judah; Hoshea took refuge there; the later Zechariah laboured (ix., xi., xiii. 7-9) for the fusion of the two kingdoms. From the unknown, or little known, seers who endeavoured to watch over the infant destinies of Judah, to the

[1] Jeroboam lived for a time at Penuel, on the east of the Jordan, perhaps to escape all danger from Shishak's invasion. For Penuel, on the eastern side of the Jabbok, see Gen. xxxii. 22, 30; Judg. viii. 8, 17. It was important as commanding the caravan route from Damascus to Shechem.

[2] Zech. x. 4 (R.V., "exactors")

mighty prophets who inspired her early resistance to Assyria, or menaced her apostasy with ruin at the hands of Babylon, she rarely lacked for any long period the inspired guidance of moral teachers. If Judah was for many years behindhand in power, in civilisation, in literature, even in the splendour of prophetic inspiration, she still managed on the whole to uplift to the nations the standard of righteousness. That standard was often fiercely assaulted, but the standard-bearers did not faint. The torn remnants of the old ideal were still upheld by faithful hands. Neither the heathen tendencies of princes nor the vapid ceremonialism of priests were allowed unchallenged to usurp the place of religion pure and undefiled. The later Judæan prophets, and especially the greatest of them, rose to a spirituality which had never yet been attained, and was never again equalled till the rise of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings.

How clearly, then, do we see the truth of the prophetic announcement that the disruption of the kingdom was "of the Lord"! Out of apparent catastrophe was evolved infinite reparation. The abandonment of the Davidic dynasty of the Ten Tribes looked like earthly ruin. It did indeed hasten the final overthrow of all national autonomy; but that would have come in any case, humanly speaking, from Assyria, or Babylonia, or Persia, or the Seleucids, or the Ptolemies, or Rome. On the other hand, it fostered a religious power and concentration which were of more value to the world than any other blessings. "On all the past greatness and glory of Israel," says Ewald,[1] "Judah cast its free and cheerful gaze. Before its kings floated the vision

[1] *Hist. of Isr.*, iv. 12.

of great ancestors; before its prophets examples like those of Nathan and Gad; before the whole people the memory of its lofty days. And so it affords us no unworthy example of the honourable part which may be played for many centuries in the history of the world, and the rich blessings which may be imparted, even by a little kingdom, provided it adheres faithfully to the eternal truth. The gain to the higher life of humanity acquired under the earthly protection of this petty monarchy *far outweighs all that has been attempted or accomplished for the permanent good of man by many much larger states.*" "The people of Israel goes under," says Stade, "but the religion of Israel triumphs over the powers of the world, while it changes its character from the religion of a people into a religion of the world." This development of religion, as he proceeds to point out, was mainly due to the long, slow enfeeblement of the people through many centuries, until at last it had acquired a force which enabled it to survive the political annihilation of the nationality from which it sprang.

In reality both kingdoms gained under the appearance of total loss. "Every people called to high destinies," says Renan, "ought to be a small complete world, enclosing opposed poles within its bosom. Greece had at a few leagues from each other, Sparta and Athens, two antipodes to a superficial observer, but in reality rival sisters, necessary the one to the other. It was the same in Palestine."

The high merit of the historian of the two kingdoms appears in this, that, without entangling himself in details, and while he contents himself with sweeping and summary judgments, he established a moral view of history which has been ratified by the experience

of the world. He shows us how the tottering and insignificant kingdom of Judah, secured by God's promise, and rising through many backslidings into higher spirituality and faithfulness, not only out-lasted for a century the overthrow of its far more powerful rival, but kept alive the torch of faith, and handed it on to the nations of many centuries across the dust and darkness of intervening generations. And in drawing this picture he helped to secure the fulfilment of his own ideal, for he inspired into many a patriot and many a reformer the indomitable faith in God which has enabled men, in age after age, to defy obloquy and opposition, to face the prison and the sword, secure in the ultimate victory of God's truth and God's righteousness amidst the most seemingly absolute failure, and against the most apparently overwhelming odds.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"JEROBOAM THE SON OF NEBAT, WHO MADE ISRAEL TO SIN."

1 KINGS xii. 21—23.

"For from Israel is even this; the workman made it, and it is no god: yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces."—HOSEA viii. 6.

THE condemnation of the first king of Israel sounds like a melancholy and menacing refrain through the whole history of the Northern Kingdom.[1] Let us consider the extent and nature of his crime; for though the condemnation is most true if we judge merely by the issue of Jeroboam's acts, a man's guilt cannot always be measured by the immensity of its unforeseen consequences, nor can his actions and intentions be always fairly judged after the lapse of centuries. The moral judgments recorded in the Book of Kings concerning legal and ritual offences are measured by the standard of men's consciences nearly a century after Josiah's Reformation in B.C. 623, not by that which prevailed in B.C. 937, when Jeroboam came to the throne. It seems clear that, even in the opinion of his contemporaries, Jeroboam was unfaithful to the duties of the call

[1] It recurs twenty-three times: 1 Kings xiv. 16, xv. 26, 30, 34, xvi. 2, 19, 26, 31, xxi. 22, xxii. 52; 2 Kings iii. 3, x. 29, 31, xiii. 2, 6, xiv. 24, xv. 9, 18, 24, 28, xvii. 21, 22, xxiii. 15.

which he had received from God; but it would be an error to suppose that his sin was, in itself, so heinous as those of which both Solomon and Rehoboam and other kings of Judah were guilty. "Calf-worship," as it was contemptuously called in later days, did not present itself as "calf-worship" to Jeroboam or his people. To them it was only the more definite adoration of Jehovah under the guise of the cherubic emblem which Solomon had himself enshrined in the Temple and Moses himself had sanctioned in the Tabernacle. There is not a word to show that they were cognisant of the book which had narrated the fierce reprobation by Moses of Aaron's "golden calf" in the wilderness. Jeroboam's chief sin was not that as a king he tolerated, or even set up, a sort of idolatry, but that he induced the whole body of his subjects to share in his evil innovations.

The charge brought against him was threefold. First, he set up the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Secondly, he "made priests from among all the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." Thirdly, he established his "harvest feast" not on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which was the Feast of Tabernacles, but on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. In estimating these sins let us endeavour—for it is a sacred duty—to be just.

1. We read in the Authorised Version that "he made priests of *the lowest* of the people,"[1] and this tends to increase the prejudice against him. But to have done this wilfully would have been entirely against his own

[1] Literally, "*he filled the hand*," because the priests were consecrated by putting into their hands the parts of the sacrifice which were to be presented to God on the altar (Exod. xxviii. 41, xxix. 9-35; Lev. viii. 27).

interests. The more honourable his priests were, the more was his new worship likely to succeed. The Hebrew only says that "he made priests of all classes of the people," or, as the Revised Version renders it, "from among all the people." No doubt this would appear to have been a heinous innovation, judged from the practice of later ages; it is not clear that it was equally so in the days of Jeroboam. If David, unrebuked, made his sons priests; if Ira the Ithrite was a priest; if Solomon, by his own fiat, altered the succession of the priesthood; if Solomon (no less than Jeroboam) arrogated to himself priestly functions on public occasions, the opinion as to priestly rights may not have existed in the days of Jeroboam, or may only have existed in an infinitely weaker form than in the days of the post-exilic chronicler. An incidental notice in another book shows us that in Dan, at any rate, he did *not* disturb the Levitic ministry. There the descendants of Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the grandson of Moses,[1] continued their priestly functions from the day when that unworthy descendant of the mighty lawgiver was seduced to conduct a grossly irregular cult for a few shillings a year, down to the day when the golden calf at Dan was carried away by Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria. If the Levites preferred to abide by the ministrations of Jerusalem, and migrated in large numbers to the south, Jeroboam may have held that necessity compelled him to appoint priests who were not of the House of Levi. Neither for this, nor for his new feast of Tabernacles, nor for the calf-worship, were the kings of Israel condemned (so far

[1] Such is the true reading. The "Manasseh" of our existing text is a Jewish falsification of the text timidly and tentatively introduced to protect the memory of Moses (see Judg. xviii. 26 ff.).

as is recorded) even by such mighty prophets as Elijah and Elisha.

In choosing Dan and Bethel as the seats for his new altars, the king was not actuated by purely arbitrary considerations. They were ancient and venerated shrines of pilgrimage and worship (Judg. xviii. 30, xx. 18, 26; 1 Sam. x. 3). He did not create any sacredness which was not already attached to them in the popular imagination.[1] In point of fact he would have served the ends of a worldly policy much better if he had chosen Shechem; for Dan and Bethel were the two farthest parts of his kingdom. Dan was in constant danger from the Syrians, and Bethel, which is only twelve miles from Jerusalem, more than once fell into the hands of the kings of Judah, though they neither retained possession of it, nor disturbed the shrines, nor threw down the "calf" of the new worship. Jeroboam could not have created the "calf-worship" if he had not found everything prepared for its acceptance. Dan had been, since the earliest days, the seat of a chapelry and ephod served by the lineal descendants of Moses in unbroken succession; Bethel was associated with some of the nation's holiest memories since the days of their forefather Israel.

[1] For the sanctity of Bethel, "House of God," where God had twice appeared to Jacob, see Gen. xxviii. 11-19, xxxv. 9-15. The Ark had once rested there under Phinehas (Judg. xx. 26-28), and it had been the home of Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 16). Dan, too, was "a holy city" (Judg. xviii. 30, 31; Tobit i. 5, 6). In 1 Kings xii. 30 ("the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan") some words may have dropped out. Klostermann adds, "and neglected Bethel"; but is that the fact? The LXX. adds, *καὶ εἶσαν τὸν ἄκον Κυρίου*. On the other hand, the clause has been taken to imply the opposite—*i.e.*, that even as far as Dan some were found who went in preference to Bethel, "the king's chapel" (Amos vii. 13). In 1 Kings xii. 28 the fairer rendering would be, "These are thy *God*," not "gods."

2. Again, if in Jeroboam's day the Priestly Code was in existence, he was clearly guilty of unjustifiable wilfulness in altering the time for observing the Feast of Tabernacles from the seventh to the eighth month. But if there be little or no contemporary trace of any observation of the Feast of Tabernacles—if, as Nehemiah tells us, it had not once been *properly* observed from the days of Joshua to his own, or if Jeroboam was unaware of any sacred legislation on the subject—the writers of the tenth century may have judged too severely the fixing of a date for the Feast of Ingathering, which may have seemed more suitable to the conditions of the northern and western tribes. For in parts of that region the harvest ripens a month earlier than in Judah, and the festival was meant to be kept at the season of harvest.[1]

3. These, however, were but incidental and subordinate matters compared with the setting up of the golden calves.

Jeroboam felt that if his people flocked to do sacrifice at the new and gorgeous Temple in Jerusalem they would return to their old monarchy and put him to death. He wished to avoid the fate of Ishbosheth.[2] He believed that he should be doing both a popular and a politic act if he saved them from the burden of this long journey and again decentralised the cult which Solomon had so recently centralised. He determined, therefore, to furnish the Ten Tribes with high places, and temples of high places, and objects of worship which might rival the golden cherubim

[1] Lev. xxiii. 39. There is no hint about the other two annual feasts of Passover and Pentecost. Josephus implies that Jeroboam's feast was in the *seventh* month, as in Judah (*Antt.*, VIII. viii. 5).

[2] 2 Sam. iv. 7.

of Zion, and be honoured with festal music and royal pomp.

He never dreamed either of apostatising from Jehovah, or of establishing the worship of idols. He broke the Second Commandment under pretence of helping the people to keep the first. The images which he set up were not meant to be *substitutes* for the one God, the God of their fathers, the God who had brought them from the land of Egypt; they were regarded as figures of Jehovah under the well understood and universally adopted emblem of a young bull, the symbol of fertility and strength.[1] Some have fancied that he was influenced by his Egyptian reminiscences, and perhaps by Ano, his traditional Egyptian bride. That is an obvious error. In Egypt *living* bulls were worshipped under the names of Apis and Mnevis, not idol-figures. Egyptian gods would have been strange reminders of Him who delivered His people from Egyptian tyranny. It would have been insensate, by quoting the very words of Aaron, to recall to the minds of the people the disasters which had followed the worship of the golden calf in the wilderness.[2] Beyond all question, Jeroboam neither did nor would have dreamed of bidding his whole people to abandon their faith and worship Egyptian idols, which never found any favour among the Israelites. He only encouraged them to worship Jehovah under the form of the cherubim.[3] Whatever may have been

[1] Conceivably there may have been a reference to the heraldic sign of Ephraim (Deut. xxxiii. 17), as Klostermann supposes.

[2] Exod. xx. 23, xxxii. 4, 8. See Professor Paul Cassel, *König Jeroboam*, p. 6. The identity of Jeroboam's words with Exod. xxxii. 4 may be due to the narrator.

[3] It has been considered probable that he found an additional sanction for these material symbols in an ancient existing image at

the aspect of the cherubim in the Oracle of the Temple, cherubic emblems appeared profusely amid its ornamentation, and the most conspicuous object in its courts was the molten sea, supported on the backs of twelve bulls. It is true that later prophets and poets, like Hosea and the Psalmist, spoke in scorn of his images as mere "calves," and spoke of him as likening his Maker to "an ox that eateth hay."[1] They even came in due time to regard them as figures of Baal and Astarte,[2] but this view is falsified by the entire annals of the Northern Kingdom from its commencement to its close. Jeroboam was, and always regarded himself as, a worshipper of Jehovah. He named his son and destined successor Abijah ("Jehovah is my Father"). Rehoboam himself was a far worse offender than he was, so far as the sanction of idolatry was concerned.

And yet he sinned, and yet he made Israel to sin. It is true that he did not sin against the full extent of the light and knowledge vouchsafed to men in later days. The sin of which he was guilty was the sin of worldly policy. With professions of religion on his lips he pandered to the rude and sensuous instinct which makes materialism in worship so much more attractive to all weak minds than spirituality. Proclaiming as his motive the rights of the people, he accelerated their religious degeneracy. "The means to strengthen or ruin the civil power," says Lowth, "is either to establish or destroy the right worship of

Gilgal, to which there may be obscure allusion in the Prophet Hosea (iv. 15, ix. 15).

[1] See 2 Chron. xi. 15, where the chronicler in his flaming hatred calls them devils (*i.e.*, "satyrs," *Feldteufel*, Isa. xiii. 21; comp. Hosea viii. 5, xiii. 2). They were probably two young bulls of brass overlaid with gold (see Psalm cvi. 19; Isa. xl. 19).

[2] Tobit i. 5.

God. The way to destroy religion is to embase the dispenser of it. . . This is to give the royal stamp to a piece of lead." If we may trust to Jewish tradition, there were some families in Israel who, though they clung to their old homes, and would not migrate to the south, yet refused to worship what is, not quite justly, called "the heifer Baal."[1] The legendary Tobit (i. 4-7) boasts that "when all the tribes of Naphthali fell from the house of Jerusalem and sacrificed to the heifer Baal I alone went often to Jerusalem at the feasts," and, in general, observed the provisions of the Levitic law.

There seems to have been but little religion in Jeroboam's temperament. In every other great national gathering at Shechem and other sacred places we read of religious rites.[2] No mention is made of them, no allusion occurs respecting them, in the assembly to which Jeroboam owed his throne. He might at least have consulted Ahijah, who had given him, when he was still a subject, the Divine promise and sanction of royalty. He might, had he chosen, have followed a higher and purer guidance than that of his own personal misgiving and his own arbitrary will. The error which he committed was this—he trusted in policy, not in the Living God. "It was," says Dean Stanley, "precisely the policy of Abder-Rahman, Caliph of Spain, when he arrested the movement of his subjects to Mecca, by the erection of a Holy Place of the Zeca at Cordova, and of Abd-el-Malik when he built

[1] Ἡ δάμαλις Βάαλ. If this be the right reading, not δύναμις, he feminine implies special scorn, either implying ἡ αἰσχύνη (*Bosheth*) or pointing, as Baudissin thinks, to an androgynous deity. Grätz thinks that "Bethel" may be the true reading.

[2] Josh. xxiv. 1; 1 Sam. x. 19; 2 Sam. v. 1-3; 1 Kings viii. 1-5, 62.

the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem, because of his quarrel with the authorities at Mecca." He was not guilty of revolt, for he acted under prophetic sanction; nor of idolatry, for he did not abandon the worship of Jehovah; but "he broke the unity and tampered with the spiritual conception of the national worship. From worshipping God under a gross material symbol, the Israelites gradually learnt to worship other gods altogether; and the venerable sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel prepared the way for the temples of Ashtaroth and Bethel at Samaria and Jezreel. The religion of the kingdom of Israel at last sank lower than that of the kingdom of Judah against which it had revolted. 'The sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin,' is the sin again and again repeated in the policy, half-worldly, half-religious, which has prevailed through large tracts of ecclesiastical history. Many are the forms of worship which, with high pretensions, have been nothing else but so many various and opposite ways of breaking the Second Commandment. Many a time has the end been held to justify the means, and the Divine character been degraded by the pretence, or even the sincere intention, of upholding His cause, for the sake of secular aggrandisement; for the sake of binding together good systems, which it was feared would otherwise fall to pieces; for the sake of supporting the faith of the multitude for fear they should otherwise fall away to rival sects, or lest the enemy should come and take away their place and nation. False arguments have been used in support of religious truths, false miracles promulgated or tolerated, false readings in the sacred text defended. . . And so the faith of mankind has been undermined by the very means intended to

preserve it. The whole subsequent history is a record of the mode by which, with the best intentions, a Church and nation may be corrupted."

This view of Dean Stanley is confirmed by another wise teacher, Professor F. D. Maurice. Jeroboam, he says, "did not trust the Living God. He thought, not that his kingdom stood upon a Divine *foundation*, but that it was to be upheld by certain Divine props and *sanctions*. The two doctrines seem closely akin. Many regard them as identical. In truth there is a whole heaven between them. The king who believes that his kingdom has a Divine foundation confesses his own subjection and responsibility to an actual living ruler. The king who desires to surround himself with Divine sanctions would fain make himself supreme, knows that he cannot, and would therefore seek help from the fear men have of an invisible power in which they have ceased to believe. He wants a God as the support of his authority. *What* God he cares very little."

And thus, to quote once more, "the departure from spiritual principles out of political motives surely leads to destruction, and is here portrayed for all times."[1]

[1] Vilmar.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JEROBOAM, AND THE MAN OF GOD.

1 KINGS xiii. 1—34.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God."—1 JOHN iv. 1.

"Οὐ γὰρ ἔδει τὸν τῆς θείας ἀκηκοότα φωνῆς ἀνθρωπίνῃ πιστέυσαι τἀνάντια λεγούσῃ."—THEODORET.

WE are told that Jeroboam, whose position probably made him restless and insecure, first built or fortified Shechem, and then went across the Jordan and established another palace and stronghold at Penuel. After this he shifted his residence once more to the beautiful town of Tirzah,[1] where he built for himself the palace which Zimri afterwards burnt over his own head. Although the prophet Shemaiah forbade Rehoboam's attempt to crush him in a great war, Jeroboam remained at war with him and Abijah all his life, till his reign of two-and-twenty troubled years ended apparently by a sudden death—for the chronicler says that "the Lord struck him, and he died."

Nearly all that we know of Jeroboam apart from these incidental notices is made up of two stories, both of which are believed by critics to date from a long subsequent age, but which the compiler of the Book

[1] Now Talura, six miles north of Nablus

of Kings introduced into his narrative from their intrinsic force and religious instructiveness.

The first of these stories tells us of the only spontaneous prophetic protest against his proceedings of which we read. So ancient is this curious narrative that tradition had entirely forgotten the names of the two prophets concerned in it. It probably assumed shape from the dim local reminiscences evoked in the days of Josiah's reformation, when the grave of a forgotten prophet of Judah was discovered among the tombs at Bethel, three hundred and twenty years after the events described.

A nameless man of God—Josephus calls him Jadon, and some have identified him with Iddo[1]—came out of Judah to atone for the silence of Israel, and to protest in God's name against the new worship. His protest, however, is against "the altar." He does not say a word about the golden calves. Jeroboam, perhaps, at his dedication festival of the king's shrine at Bethel, was standing on the altar-slope,[2] as Solomon had done in the Temple, to burn incense. Suddenly the man of God appeared, and threatened to the altar the destruction and desecration which subsequently fell upon it. We cannot be sure that some of the details are not later additions supplied from subsequent events. Josephus rationalises the story very absurdly in the style of Paulus. The sign of the destruction or rending

[1] So, too, Jarchi. No doubt they were guided by the remark in 2 Chron. ix. 29, "the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam." But it is not possible, for Iddo lived to a later date (2 Chron. xiii. 22). Ephrem Syrus and Tertullian suppose him to have been Shemaiah (comp. 2 Chron. xii. 5). These are untenable guesses. Epiphanius calls him Joas; Clement, Abd-adonai; Tertullian, Sameas.

[2] Not "*by* the altar," as in A.V. LXX., ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον; Vulg., *super altare.*

of the altar, and the outpouring of the ashes,[1] may have been first fulfilled in that memorable earthquake which became a date in Israel.[2] The desecration which it received at the hands of Josiah reminded men of the threat of the unknown messenger.[3] Then we are told that Jeroboam raised his hand in anger, with the order to secure the bold offender, but that his arm at once "dried up," and was only restored by the man of God[4] at the king's entreaty. The king invites the prophet to go home and refresh himself and receive a reward; but he replies that not half Jeroboam's house could tempt him to break the command which he had received to eat no bread neither drink water at Bethel. An old Israelite prophet was living at Bethel, and his son told

[1] The ashes of the animal offerings (דֶּשֶׁן) used to be carried away to a clean place (Lev. vi. 11).

[2] Amos ix. 1. The Vatican LXX. distinctly makes the sign a *future* one (1 Kings xiii. 3), *καὶ δώσει ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τέρας.* The narrative seems to *suppose*, but it does not assert that the altar was rent *then and there* Had these miracles immediately followed, it is difficult to imagine that no deeper impression should have been made. As it was the new cult does not seem to have been interrupted for a single day.

[3] The mention by name of a king three centuries before he was even born is wholly alien from every characteristic of Jewish prophecy, and, as in the case of Cyrus (Isa. xliv. 28), it would be false to say that we have even a particle of evidence to show that the name was not added from a marginal gloss or by the latest redactor. He also makes the mistake of putting into the old prophet's mouth the phrase "all the cities of Samaria" at least fifty years before Samaria existed (1 Kings xvi. 24). Keil's remark that "*Josiah*" is only used appellatively for one whom Jehovah will support (!) is one of the miserable expedients of reckless harmonists. Even Bähr, *ad loc.*, admits that the narrative is of later date, and has received a traditional colouring. In 2 Kings xxiii. 15-18 there is no hint that Josiah had been prophesied of by name.

[4] 1 Kings xiii. 6, "Intreat now" (*lit.*, "make soft") "the face of the Lord." Klostermann, "Besänftige noch das Angesicht Jahve's."

him what had occurred. Struck with admiration by the faithfulness of the southern man of God, he rode after him to bring him to his house. He found him seated under "the terebinth"—evidently some aged and famous tree. When he refused the renewed invitation, the old man lyingly said to him that he too was a man of God, and had been bidden by an angel to bring him back. Deceived, perhaps too easily deceived, the man of God from Judah went back. It would have been well for him if he had believed that even "an angel of God," or what may seem to wear such a semblance, may preach a false message, and may deserve nothing but an anathema.[1] With terrible swiftness the delusion was dispelled. While he was eating in Bethel, the old prophet, overcome by an impulse of inspiration, told him that for his disobedience he should perish and lie in a strange grave. Accordingly he had not gone far from Bethel when a lion met and killed him, not, however, mangling or devouring him, but standing still with the ass beside the carcase.[2] On hearing this the old prophet of Bethel went and brought back the corpse. He mourned over his victim with the cry, "Alas, my brother,"[3] and bade his sons that when he died they should bury him in the same sepulchre with the man of God, for all that he had prophesied should come to pass.

[1] Gal. i. 8.

[2] Klostermann, in his *Kurzgefasster Kommentar*, gets rid of the lion altogether by one of his sweeping emendations of the text, p. 352. He considers that the whole story comes from a book of edifying anecdotes for the use of young prophets in the schools; and that it may have some connexion with the threat of another Jewish prophet against the altar at Bethel in the days of another Jeroboam (Amos iii. 14, vii. 9).

[3] Comp. Jer. xxii. 18.

Josephus adds many idle touches to this story. If in a tale which assumed its present form so long after the events imaginative details were introduced, the incident of the lion subserves the moral aim of the narrative (2 Kings xvii. 25; Jer. xxv. 30, xlix. 19; Wisdom xi. 15-17, etc.). The significance of the story for us is happily neither historic nor evidential, but it is profoundly moral. It is the lesson not to linger in the neighbourhood of temptation, nor to be dilatory in the completion of duty.[1] It is the lesson to be ever on our guard against the tendency to assume inspired sanction for the conduct and opinions which coincide with our own secret wishes. Satan finds it easy to secure our credence when he answers us according to our idols, and can quote Scripture for our purpose as well as his own; and God sometimes punishes men by granting them their own desires, and sending leanness withal into their bones. The man of God from Judah had received a distinct injunction from which the invitation of a king had been insufficient to shake him. If the old prophet wilfully lied, his victim was willingly seduced. We may think his sin venial, his punishment excessive. It will not seem so unless we unduly extenuate his sin and unduly exaggerate the nature of his penalty.

His sin consisted in his ready acceptance of a sham inspiration which came to him from a tainted source, and which he ought to have suspected because it conceded what he desired. God's indisputable intimations to our individual souls are not to be set aside except

[1] The older expositors at any rate see in the prophet's rest under the terebinth, so near Bethel, "peccati initium; moras utique nectere non debuit." It was like Eve's lingering near the place where temptation lay.

by intimations no less indisputable. There had been an obvious reason for the command which God had given. The reason still existed; the prohibition had not been withdrawn. The sham revelation furnished him with an excuse; it did not give him a justification. Doubtless Jadon's first thought was that

> "He lied in every word,
> That hoary prophet, with malicious eye,
> Askance to watch the working of his lie."

Why did he yield so readily? It was for the same reason which causes so many to sin. "The tempting opportunity" did but meet, as sooner or later it always *will* meet, "the susceptible disposition."

Yet his punishment does not justify us in branding him as a weak or a vicious man. We must judge him and all men, at his best, not at his worst; in his hours of faithfulness and splendid courage, not in his moment of unworthy acquiescence.

And his speedy punishment was his best blessing. Who knows what might not have happened to him if the speck of conventionality and corruption had been allowed to spread? Who can tell whether in due time he might not have sunk into something no better than his miserable tempter? Rather than that we should be in any respect false to our loftiest ideals, or less noble than our better selves, let the lion meet us, let the tower of Siloam fall on us, let our blood be mingled with our sacrifices. Better physical death than spiritual degeneracy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOOM OF THE HOUSE OF NEBAT.

1 KINGS xiv. 1—20.[1]

"Whom the gods love die young."
"Τὸ παιδίον ἀπέθανεν; ἀπεδόθη."—EPICTET.

THE other story about Jeroboam is full of pathos, and though here, too, there are obvious signs that, in its present form, it could hardly have come from a contemporary source, it doubtless records an historic tradition. It is missing in the Septuagint, though in some copies the blank is supplied from Aquila's version.

Jeroboam was living with his queen at Tirzah when, as a judgment on him for his neglect of the Divine warning, his eldest and much loved son, Abijah, fell sick. Torn with anxiety the king asked his wife to disguise herself that she might not be recognised on her journey, and to go to Shiloh, where Ahijah the prophet lived,[2] to inquire about the dear youth's fate. "Take with you," he said, "as a present to the

[1] "'Whom the gods love die young' was said of yore" (Byron). It was said by Menander: "Ὃν γὰρ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν ἀποθνήσκει νεός"; and by Plautus: "Quem dii diligunt, adolescens moritur" (*Bacch.*, iv. 7, 18). A similar thought is found in Plutarch, in St. Chrysostom, and many others.

[2] Ahijah had not followed the example of the Levites and pious persons who, the chronicler says, went in numbers to the Southern Kingdom.

prophet ten loaves, and some little cakes for the prophet's children,[1] and a cruse of honey."

Jeroboam remembered that Ahijah's former prophecy had been fulfilled, and believed that he would again be able to reveal the future, and say whether the heir to the throne would recover. The queen obeyed; and if she were indeed the Egyptian princess Ano, it must have been for her a strange experience. Through the winding valley, she reached the home of the aged prophet unrecognised. But he had received a Divine intimation of her errand; and though his eyes were now blind with the *gutta serena*,[2] he at once addressed her by name when he heard the sound of her approaching footsteps. The message which he was bidden to pronounce was utterly terrible; it was unrelieved by a single gleam of mitigation or a single expression of pity. It reproached and denounced Jeroboam for faithless ingratitude in that he had cast God behind his back;[3] it threatened hopeless and shameful extermination to all his house.[4] His dynasty should be swept away like dung. The corpses of his children should be left unburied and be devoured by vultures

[1] Nikuddim (only elsewhere in Josh. ix. 5-12); LXX., κολλυρίδες; Vulg., *crustula*; A.V., "cracknels." They were some sort of cakes. Presents to prophets were customary (see 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8; 1 Kings xiii. 7; 2 Kings v. 5, viii. 8, 9).

[2] Heb., "His eyes stood" (comp. 1 Sam. iv. 15). It seems to imply *amaurosis*.

[3] This tremendous expression only occurs elsewhere in Ezek. xxiii. 35; but comp. Psalm l. 17; Neh. ix. 26.

[4] The coarse expression of 1 Kings xiv. 10 (1 Sam. xxv. 22; 2 Kings ix. 8) means "every male." The phrase "him that is shut up and him that is left in Israel" (Deut. xxxii. 36) is obscure and alliterative. It has been variously explained to mean, (1) "bond and free," (2) "imprisoned or released," (3) "kept in by legal impurity or at large" (Jer. xxxvi. 5), (4) "under or over age," (5) "married or

and wild dogs.[1] The moment the feet of the queen reached her house the youth should die, and this bereavement, heavy as it was, should be the sole act of mercy in the tragedy, for it should take away Abijah from the dreadful days to come, because in him alone of the House of Jeroboam had God seen something good. The avenger should be a new king, and all this should come to pass "even now."[2]

This speech of the prophet is given in a rhythmical form, and has probably been mingled with later touches. It falls into two strophes (7-11, 12-16) of 3 + 2 and 2 + 3 verses.[3] The expressions "thou hast done above *all that were before thee*, for thou hast gone and made thee *other gods*" (verse 9) hardly suits the case of Jeroboam; and the omission by the LXX. of the prophecy of Israel's ultimate captivity, together with the treatment of the prophecy by Josephus, throw some doubt on verses 9, 15, and 16.[4] They seem to charge Jeroboam with sanctioning *Asherim*, or wooden images of the Nature-goddess Asherah, of which we read

unmarried." (Reuss renders the paronomasia, "qu'il soit caché ou lâché en Israel.") LXX. ἐχόμενον καὶ ἐγκαταλελειμμένον; Vulg. *clausum et novissimum.*

[1] In ancient days this was regarded as the most terrible of calamities.

"Ἀλλ' ἄρα τόνγε κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατέδαψαν
Κείμενον ἐν προθύρῳ ἑκὰς ἄστεος, οὐδέ κέ τίς μιν
Κλαῦσεν Ἀχαιϊάδων· μάλα γὰρ μέγα μήσατο ἔργον."
Hom., *Od.*, iii. 258.

Comp. Deut. xxviii. 26; 1 Sam. xvii. 44, 45. And after in Jeremiah (vii. 33, viii. 2, ix. 22, etc.) and Ezekiel (xxix. 5, xxxix. 17, etc.).

[2] 1 Kings xiv. 14: "That day: but what? even now."

[3] It is almost identical with the message of doom pronounced on other kings, like Baasha (1 Kings xvi. 3-5) and Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 19-23).

[4] Ewald pronounces them to be clearly an addition of the Deuteronomist.

in the history of Judah, but which are never mentioned in the acts of Jeroboam, and do not accord with his avowed policy. These may possibly be due to the forms which the tradition assumed in later days.

The awful prophecy was fulfilled. As the hapless mother set foot on the threshold of her palace at beautiful Tirzah the young prince died, and she heard the wail of the mourners for him.[1] He alone was buried in the grave of his fathers, and Israel mourned for him. He was evidently a prince of much hope and promise, and the deaths of such princes have always peculiarly affected the sympathy of nations. We know in Roman history the sigh which arose at the early death of Marcellus:—

> "Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata neque ultra
> Esse sinent. Nimium vobis, Romana propago,
> Visa potens, superi, propria hæc si dona fuissent,
> Heu miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas
> Tu Marcellus eris."[2]

We know the remark of Tacitus as he contemplates the deaths of Germanicus, Caius, and Drusus, Piso Licinianus, Britannicus, and Titus, "*breves atque infaustos Populi Romani amores.*" We know how, when Prince William was drowned in the *White Ship*, Henry of England never smiled again; and how the nation mourned the deaths of Prince Alfonso, of the Black Prince, of Prince Arthur, of Prince Henry, of the Princess Charlotte, of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale. But these untimely deaths of youths in their early bloom, before their day,

> "Impositique rogis juvenes ante ora parentum,"

[1] LXX., *εἰς γῆν Σαιρά.* The additions to the LXX. have the touching incident, "Καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν Σαιρὰ καὶ τὸ παιδάριον ἀπέθανεν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἡ κραυγὴ εἰς ἀπαντήν."

[2] Verg., *Æn.*, vi. 870.

are not half so deplorable as the case of those who have grown up like Nero to blight every hope which has been formed of them. When Louis le *Bien-Aimé* lay ill of the fever at Metz which seemed likely to be fatal, all France wept and prayed for him. He recovered, and grew up to be that portent of selfish boredom and callous sensuality, Louis XV. It was better that Abijah should die than that he should live to be overwhelmed in the shameful ruin which soon overtook his house. It was better far that he should die than that he should grow up to frustrate the promise of his youth. He was beckoned by the hand of God "because in him was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." We are not told wherein the goodness consisted, but Rabbinic tradition guessed that in opposition to his father he discountenanced the calf-worship and encouraged and helped the people to continue their visits to Jerusalem. Such a king might indeed have recovered the whole kingdom, and have dispossessed David's degenerate line. But it was not to be. The fiat against Israel had gone forth, though a long space was to intervene before it was fulfilled. And God's fiats are irrevocable, because with Him there is no changeableness neither shadow of turning.

> "The moving finger writes, and, having writ,
> Moves on; nor all thy piety nor wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it."

But the passage about Abijah has a unique preciousness, because it stands alone in Scripture as an expression of the truth that early death is no sign at all of the Divine anger, and that the length or brevity of life are matters of little significance to God, seeing

that, at the best, the longest life is but as one tick of the clock in the eternal silence. The promise to filial obedience, "that thy days may be long," in the Fifth Commandment is primarily national; and although undoubtedly "length of days" then, as now, was regarded as a blessing,[1] yet the blessing is purely relative, and wholly incommensurate with others which affect the character and the life to come. This passage may be the consolation of many thousands of hearts that ache for some dear lost child. "Is it well with the child?" "It is well!" The story of Cleobis and Biton shows how fully the wisest of the ancients had recognised the truth that early death may be a boon of God to save His children from being snared in the evil days. "Honourable age," says the Book of Wisdom, "is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. He pleased God, and was beloved of Him: so that living among sinners he was translated. Yea, speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. . . . He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time: for his soul pleased the Lord: therefore He hastens to take him away from among the wicked."[2] It is the truth so beautifully expressed by Seneca: "*Vita non quam diu sed quam bene acta refert*"; by St. Ambrose: "*Perfecta est ætas, ubi perfecta est virtus*"; by Wordsworth:—

> "The good die early,
> And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
> Burn to the socket;"

[1] See Job xii. 12; Psalm xxi. 4; Prov. iii. 2-16.
[2] Wisdom iv. 8-14.

and by Ben Jonson :—

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be:
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall, a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

It is recorded also on the tomb of a gallant youth, in Westminster Abbey, "Francis Holles, who died at eighteen years of age after noble deeds":—

"Man's life is measured by the work, not days;
Not aged sloth, but active youth, hath praise."

CHAPTER XXIX.

NADAB; BAASHA; ELAH.

1 KINGS xv. 25—xvi. 10.

"Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together."—MATT. xxiv. 28.

JEROBOAM slept with his fathers and went to his own place, leaving behind him his dreadful epitaph upon the sacred page. His son Nadab succeeded him. In his reign of twenty-two years the first king of Israel had outlived Rehoboam and his son Abijah. Asa, the great grandson of Solomon, was already on the throne of Judah. Of Nadab we are told next to nothing. The appreciation of the kings of Israel tends to drift into the meagre formula that they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he caused Israel to sin. In the second year of his reign Nadab was engaged in a wearisome military expedition against Gibbethon in the Shephelah, which belonged to the Philistines. It was a Levitical city in the tribe of Dan, which had been assigned to the Kohathites, and its siege continued for twenty-seven years with no apparent result.[1] That the Philistines, who had been so utterly crushed by David and

[1] Josh. xix. 44, xxi. 23; 1 Kings xv. 27, xvi. 15.

who were an insignificant power, should have thus been able to assert themselves once more, is a proof of the weakness to which Israel had been reduced. While Nadab was thus occupied, an obscure conspirator, Baasha, son of Ahijah, of the tribe of Issachar,[1] actuated perhaps by tribal jealousy, or stirred up as Jeroboam had been before him and as Jehu was after him by some prophetic message, conspired against him, and slew him.[2] As soon as this military revolt had placed Baasha on the throne he fulfilled the frightful curse which Ahijah had uttered against the House of Jeroboam. He absolutely exterminated the family of Nebat, and left him neither kinsman nor friend to avenge his death. He seems to have been a powerful soldier, and he inflicted severe humiliation on the Southern Kingdom until Asa bribed Benhadad to invade his territory. He reigned at Tirzah for twenty-four years, of which nothing is recorded but the ordinary formula. Towards the close of his reign he received from the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, the message of his doom. Jehu must have been at this time a young prophet. According to the Chronicles his father Hanani rebuked Asa for the alliance which (as we shall see) he made with the Syrian against Baasha;[3] and he himself rebuked Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab, and lived to be his annalist.[4] Like Amos, he lived in Judah, but prophesied also against a king of Israel.

[1] His father therefore could not have been Ahijah the prophet, who was an Ephraimite. He was the only ruler who came from slothful Issachar (Gen. xlix. 14, 15) except the unknown Tola (Judg. x. 1).

[2] For any other records of Nadab the writer refers to "the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel."

[3] 2 Chron. xvi. 7-10.

[4] 2 Chron. xx. 34.

He told Baasha that God, who had exalted him out of the dust to be king of Israel, should inflict on his family the same terrible extirpation which He had inflicted on the House of Jeroboam, whose sins he had, nevertheless, followed.

Baasha "slept with his fathers," and his son Elah succeeded him. Elah seems to have been an incapable drunkard, and reigned in Tirzah for less than two years. While he was drinking himself drunk, not even secretly in his own palace, but in the house of his chamberlain Arza—a shamelessness which was regarded as an aggravation of his offence[1]—he was murdered by Zimri, the captain of half of his chariots, and the revolting tragedy of massacre was enacted once again.[2] The fact that Baasha was a man of no distinction, but "exalted *out of the dust*" (1 Kings xvi. 2), probably added to the weakness of his dynasty.

From such meagre records of horror there is not much to learn beyond the general truth of the Nemesis which dogs the heels of crime; but there is one significant clause which throws great light on the judgment which we are asked to form of these events. The prophet Jehu rebukes Baasha for showing himself false to the destiny to which God had summoned him. He implies, therefore, that Baasha had some Divine sanction for the revolution which he headed; and certainly in his slaughter of the House of Jeroboam he was the instrument of a Divine decree. Yet we are expressly

[1] Comp. Hosea vii. 3-7.

[2] If Zimri was a descendant of the House of Saul, as is possible from the occurrence of the name in the number of Saul's descendants (1 Chron. viii. 36), we perhaps see an excuse for his ill-considered conspiracy. He acted, says Grotius, upon the principle, "Νήπιος ὃς πατέρα κτείνας υἱοὺς καταλείπει."

told that "he provoked the Lord to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the House of Jeroboam, *and because he killed him*," or, as it is rendered in the Revised Version margin, "*because he smote it.*" This is not the only place where we find that a man may be in *one sense* commissioned to do a deed of blood, yet in another sense may be held guilty for fulfilment of the commission.[1] The prophecy of extirpation had been passed, but the cruel agent of its accomplishment was not thereby condoned. God's decrees are carried out as part of the vast scheme of Providence, and He may use guilty hands to fulfil His purposes. King Jehu is His minister of vengeance, but the tiger-like ferocity with which he carried out his work awoke God's anger and received God's punishment. The King of Babylon fulfils the purpose for which he had been appointed, but his ruthlessness receives its just recompense. The wrath of man may accomplish the decrees of God, but it worketh not His righteousness. Herod and Pontius Pilate, Jews and Gentiles, priests and Pharisees, rulers and the mob may rage against Christ, but all they can accomplish is "whatsoever God's hand and God's counsel determine before to be done."

[1] Comp. 2 Kings ix. 7 with Hosea i. 4. Thus Babylon is at once commissioned to punish, and condemned for ruthlessness: Isa. xlvii. 6

CHAPTER XXX.

THE EARLIER KINGS OF JUDAH.

1 KINGS xiv. 21—31, xv. 1—24.

THE history of "*the Jews*" begins, properly speaking, from the reign of Rehoboam, and for four centuries it is mainly the history of the Davidic dynasty.

The only records of the son of Solomon are meagre records of disaster and disgrace. He reigned seventeen years, and his mother, the Ammonitess Naamah, occupied the position of queen-mother.[1] She was, doubtless, a worshipper in the shrine which Solomon had built for her national god, Molech of Ammon, who was the same as the Ashtar-Chemosh of the Moabite stone—the male form of Ashtoreth.[2] Whether her son was twenty-one or forty-one when he succeeded to the throne we do not know.[3] His attempted expedition against Jeroboam was forbidden by Shemaiah;[4] but

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[1] According to the LXX. she was a daughter of Hanun, son of Naash, King of Ammon (2 Sam. x. 1).

[2] Canon Rawlinson, *Kings of Israel and Judah.*

[3] 1 Kings xiv. 21. "A boy and faint-hearted" (2 Chron. xiii. 7). The additions to the LXX. say that he was sixteen, and reigned twelve years.

[4] In the LXX. additions it was a little before this occasion (after the revolt) that "Shemaiah the Enlamite" tore his new cloak and gave ten parts to Jeroboam.

ineffectual and distressing war smouldered on between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. If Jeroboam sinned by the erection in the old sanctuaries of the two golden calves, Rehoboam surely sinned far more heinously. He not only sanctioned the high places—which in him may have been very venial, since they held their own unchallenged till the days of Hezekiah—but he allowed stone obelisks (*Matstseboth*) in honour of Baal, and pillars (*Chammanim*) of the Nature-goddess (*Asherah*) to be set up on every high hill and under every green tree.[1] Worse than this, and a proof of the abyss of corruption into which the evil example of Solomon had beguiled the nation, there were found in the land the *Kedeshim*, the infamous eunuch-ministers of a most foul worship.[2] In spite of Temple and priesthood, "they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord drave out before the children of Israel."[3] Since Rehoboam thus sinned so much more heinously than his northern compeer we can hardly admire the conduct of the Levites, who, according to the chronicler, fled southward in swarms from the innovations of the son of Nebat. The Scylla

[1] The *Chammanim* were, according to some, pillars to Baal-Hammon. For the *Asherim*, see Deut. xvi. 21; 2 Kings xxi. 3. They were wooden pillars to Asherah, and were called *Asherim* just as statues of the Virgin are called "Virgins." *Asheroth* seem to be various forms of the Nature-goddess herself (2 Chron. xxxiii. 3). Asherah = Ὀρθία. Like the other kings of Judah, Rehoboam had an exaggerated harem, and provided for the young princes by settling them in separate cities as governors.

[2] Jerome compares them to the horrible *Galli* of the Syrian goddess. LXX., τετελεσμένοι ("initiated"); Aquila, ἐνηλλαγμένοι ("changed"); Theodotion, κεχωρισμένοι ("set apart"); Symmachus, ἑταιρίδες. They were also called "dogs" (comp. Deut. xxiii. 18).

[3] According to the chronicler Rehoboam's defection only began in the fourth year of his reign.

of calf-worship was incomparably less shameful than the Charybdis of these heathen abominations.

Such atrocities could not be left unpunished. Where the carcase is the eagles will gather. In the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak, King of Egypt,[1] put an end to the shortlived glories of the age of Solomon. Of his reason for invading Palestine we know nothing. It was probably mere ambition and the love of plunder, stimulated by stories which Jeroboam may have brought to him about the inexhaustible riches of Jerusalem. He is the first Pharaoh whose individuality was so marked as to transcend and replace the common dynastic name.[2] He was astute enough to seize the opportunity of self-aggrandisement which offered itself when Jeroboam took refuge at his court; but the conjecture that former friendly relations induced Jeroboam to invite the services of Shishak for the destruction of his rival, is rendered impossible if Egyptologists have correctly deciphered the splendid memorial of his achievements which he twice carved on the great Temple of Amon at Karnak. There the most conspicuous figure is the colossal likeness of the king. His right hand holds a sword;[3] his left grasps by the

[1] He was the first king of the twenty-second dynasty of Bubastis or Pibeseth, and succeeded about B.C. 988 in the fourteenth year of Solomon. The Egyptians (Manetho) called him Shesonk (Sesonsochosis Sasychis, Herod., ii. 136; LXX., Σουσακίμ; Vulg., *Sesac.*

[2] He was of alien, perhaps of Assyrian, race. His family had settled at Bubastis, and his grandfather had married the daughter of the Pharaoh. His son Osorkhon also married the Princess Keramat, a daughter of the last Tanite king. Imitating the example of Hir-hor, he combined many offices, and then quietly seized the crown.

[3] Brugsch, *Geogr. Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler*, ii. 58; Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, iii. 252; *Story of the Nations: Egypt*, pp. 228-307; Stade, i. 354 (who reproduces the sculptures). They are carved on the wall of a Temple of Amon on the southern side of a smalle

hair a long line which passes round the necks of a troop of thirty-eight mean and diminutive Jewish captives. The smaller figure of the god Amon leads other strings of one hundred and thirty-three captives, and the third king from his left hand bears a name which Champollion deciphered *Yudeh-Malk*, which he took to mean King of Judah.[1] If the interpretation were correct, we should here have a picture of the son of Solomon. On the other figures are the names of the cities of which they were kings or sheykhs. Among these are not only the names of southern towns, like Ibleam, Gibeon, Bethhoron, Ajalon, Mahanaim, but even of Canaanite and Levitic cities in the Northern Kingdom, including Taanach and Megiddo.[2] Shashonq (as the monuments call him) came with a huge and motley army of many nationalities, among whom were Libyans, Troglodytes, and Ethiopians. This host was composed of twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and a numberless infantry of mercenaries. Such an invasion, though it was little more than an insulting military parade and predatory incursion, rendered resistance impossible, especially to a people enervated by luxury. Shishak came, saw,—and plundered. His chief spoil was taken from the poor

temple (built by Rameses III.). Shishak is smiting with his club a number of captive Jews, whom he grasps by the hair. The names of the towns and districts are paraded in two long rows, each name being enclosed in a shield. Amon is delivering them all to his beloved son "Shashonq." These smitten people are described as "the *Am* of a distant land, and the Fenekh" (Phœnicians).

[1] *Lit.*, "Judah-king." Brugsch thinks it is the name of a town. It cannot mean, as Champollion thought, "King of Judah."

[2] See Shishak in *Bibl. Dict.* It is extremely difficult to believe that these cities were taken by the Egyptian army in order to help Jeroboam.

dishonoured Temple and the king's palace.[1] Judah specially grieved for the loss of the shields of gold which hung on the cedar pillars of the house of the forest of Lebanon,[2]—apparently both those which Solomon had made, and those which David had consecrated from the spoils of Hadadezer, King of Zobah.[3] Perhaps a great soul would hardly have been consoled by putting mean substitutes in their place. Rehoboam, however, made bronze imitations of them in the guard-room,[4] and marched in pomp to the Temple preceded by his meanly armed runners,[5] "as though everything was the same as before." "The bitter irony with which the sacred historian records the parade of these counterfeits," says Stanley, "may be considered as the keynote to this whole period. They well represent the 'brazen shields' by which fallen churches and kingdoms have endeavoured to conceal from their own and their neighbours' eyes that the golden shields of Solomon have passed away from them."[6] The age of pinchbeck follows the age of gold, and a Louis XV. succeeds Le Grand Monarque.[7]

Rehoboam had many sons, and he "wisely" (2 Chron. xi. 23) gave them, by way of maintenance, the governorship of his fenced cities. That "he sought for them a

[1] Josephus says that Shishak did all this ἀμαχητὶ (*Antt.*, VIII. x. 2, 3), but he confuses Shishak with Sesostris (Herod., ii. 102, 106).

[2] 1 Kings x. 17.

[3] LXX., 2 Sam. viii. 7; 1 Kings x. 17. A timely humiliation saved Rehoboam from extinction, but he practically became a vassal of Egypt (2 Chron. xii. 5).

[4] הָרָצִים (Ezek. xl. 7).

[5] *Ratzim*; comp. "*Celeres*," Liv., i. 14. We hear no more of Cherethites and Pelethites. The later kings could not afford to keep up these mercenaries.

[6] *Jewish Church*, ii. 385.

[7] Renan.

multitude of wives" was perhaps a stroke of worldly policy, but an unwise and unworthy one. But their little courts and their little harems may have helped to keep them out of mischief. They might otherwise have destroyed each other by mutual jealousies.

Rehoboam was succeeded by his son Abijam. There is a little doubt as to the exact name of this king. The Book of Chronicles calls him Abijah,[1] but in 1 Kings xv. 1, 7, 8, he is called Abijam.[2] As the curious form Abijam seems to be unmeaning, it has been precariously conjectured that dislike to his idolatries led the Jews to alter a name which means "Jehovah is my Father."[3] Some doubt also rests on the name of his mother. She is here called "Maacha, the daughter of Abishalom," but in Chronicles "Michaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah." Maachah was perhaps the *granddaughter* of Absalom, whose beautiful daughter Tamar (named after his dishonoured sister) may have been the wife of Uriel. In that case her name, Maachah, was a name given her in reminiscence of her royal descent as a great-granddaughter of the princess of Geshur, who was mother of Absalom. All sorts of secrets, however, sometimes lie behind these changes of names. She was the second, but favourite wife of Rehoboam; and Abijam, who was not the eldest son, owed his throne to his father's preference for her.[4]

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[1] 2 Chron. xii. 16; comp. Abiel (1 Sam. ix. 1).

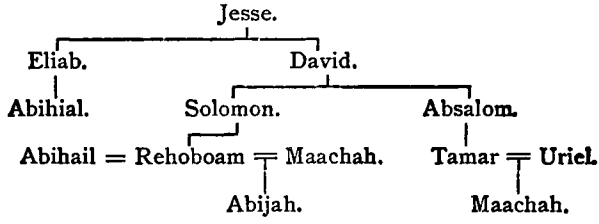
[2] Abijam seems to mean "father of the sea"; *vir maritimus*, Gesenius.

[3] So perhaps, for the same reason, Jehoahaz was shortened into Ahaz. See Canon Rawlinson on 2 Kings xv. 38 (*Speaker's Commentary*). But Simonis, *Onomasticon*, regards the final *m* as intensive.

[4] 2 Chron. xi. 18-23. Rehoboam had eighteen wives, sixty con-

All that we are here told of Abijam is that "his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God," and that "he walked in all the sins of his father"; though "for David's sake his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem";[1] and that, after a brief reign of three years—*i.e.*, of one year and parts of two others—he slept with his fathers. For "the rest of his acts and all that he did," the historian refers us to the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah: he does not trouble himself with military details. The chronicler, referring to the Commentary of Iddo,[2] adds a great deal more. Jeroboam, he says, went out against him with eight hundred thousand men. Abijam, who had only half the number, stood on Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim,[3] and made a speech to Jeroboam and his army. He reproached him with rebellion against his father when he was "young and tender-hearted," and with his golden calves, and

cubines, twenty-eight sons, and sixty daughters. A fragment of the *Stemma Davidis* may make things clearer to the reader:—



Thus on both sides, as a great-grandson and great-great-grandson, Abijah was descended from David.

[1] The lamp (LXX., *κατάλειμμα*; in xi. 36, *θέσις*) is the sign of home (1 Kings xi. 36; 2 Kings viii. 19. Comp. Psalm xviii. 28, cxxxii. 17). There was, as the chronicler boldly expressed it, "a covenant of salt" between God and the House of David (2 Chron. xiii. 5; comp. Numb. xviii. 19).

[2] 2 Chron. xiii. 22.

[3] Zemaraim was in Benjamin near Bethel (Josh. xviii. 22), apparently Kirbet *el-Szomer* in the Jordan valley, four miles north of Jericho.

his non-Levitical priests. He vaunted the superiority of the Temple priests with their holocausts and sweet incense and shewbread and golden candlestick, which priests were now with the army. Jeroboam sets an ambuscade, but at the shout of the men of Judah is routed with a loss of five hundred thousand men, after which Abijah recovers "Bethel with the towns thereof,"[1] and Jeshanah and Ephron (or "Ephraim"), completely humbling the northern king until "the Lord smote him and he died." After this Abijah waxes mighty, has fourteen wives, twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters.

If we had read two accounts so different, and presenting such insuperable difficulties to the harmonist, in secular historians, we should have made no attempt to reconcile them, but merely have endeavoured to find which record was the more trustworthy. If the pious Levitical king of 2 Chron. xiii. be a true picture of the idolater of 1 Kings xv. 3, it is clear that the accounts are difficult to reconcile, unless we resort to incessant and arbitrary hypotheses. But the earlier authority is clearly to be preferred when the two obviously conflict with each other. As it is we can only say that the kings of whom the chronicler approves are, as it were, clericalised, and seen "through a cloud of incense," all their faults being omitted. The edifying speech of Abijah, and his boast about purity of worship, sounds most strange on the lips of a king who—if he "walked in all the sins of his father"—suffered his people to be guilty of a worship grossly idolatrous, including the

[1] 2 Chron. xiii. 3-19. So that the golden calf and its chapel and its priests must, if the account be true, have fallen into his power. But it does not seem to have made the least difference. It is certain that "the calf" remained undisturbed till the days of the Assyrian invasion.

toleration of *Bamoth*, *Chammanim*, and *Asherim* on every high hill and under every green tree; and of all the abominations of the neighbouring idolaters,[1]—a state of things infinitely worse than the symbolic Jehovah-worship which Jeroboam had set up. Yet such was the strange syncretism of religion in Jerusalem, of which Solomon had set the fatal example, that (as we learn quite incidentally) Abijah seems to have dedicated certain vessels—part of his warlike spoils—to the service of the Temple.[2] They were perhaps intended to supply the gaps left by the plundering raid of Shishak.

After this brief and perplexing, but apparently eventful reign, Abijah was succeeded by his son Asa, whose long reign of forty-one years was contemporary with the reigns of no less than seven kings of Israel—Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Tibni, and Ahab.

We are told that—aided perhaps by such prophets as Hanani and Azariah, son of Oded[3] (or Iddo)—"he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Of this he gave an early, decisive, and courageous proof.

When he succeeded to the throne at an early age his grandmother Maachah still held the high position of queen-mother.[4] This great lady inherited the fame and popularity of Absalom, and was a princess both of the line of David and of Tolmai, King of Geshur. She was, and always had been, an open idolatress.[5] Asa began his reign with a reformation. He took

[1] How atrocious these "abominations were" may be seen from the Pentateuch (Lev. xviii. 3-25, xx. 1-23; Deut. xviii. 6-12).

[2] 1 Kings xv. 15.

[3] Ewald, iv. 49.

[4] Comp. the *Madame Mère* in the French court.

[5] The LXX. (Vat.) calls her Ana.

away the contemptible idols (*Gilloolim*) which his fathers had made, and suppressed the odious *Kedeshim*; or he at least made a serious, if an unsuccessful, effort to do so.[1] As to the high places we have a direct verbal contradiction. Here we are told that "they were not removed," whereas the chronicler says that "he took them away out of all the cities of Judah," but afterwards that "the high places were not taken away out of Israel," in spite of Asa's heart being perfect all his days. The explanation would seem to be that he made a partial attempt to anticipate the subsequent reformation of Hezekiah, but was defeated by the inveteracy of popular custom. He did, however, take the great step of branding with infamy the impure idolatry of the queen-mother, and he degraded her from her rank. She had made an idol, which is significantly called "a fright" or "a horror" (*Miphletzeth*),[2] to serve as an emblem of the Nature-goddess. It was probably a phallic symbol which he indignantly cut down, and burnt it, where all pollutions were destroyed, in the dry wady of the Kidron.[3] In the fifteenth year of his reign he dedicated in the Temple "silver and gold and vessels," consecrated by his father and himself for this purpose. He also restored the great altar in the porch of the Temple, which in the course of more than sixty years had fallen into neglect and disrepair.

For ten years the land had rest under this pious king, though war was always smouldering between him

[1] That it was not perfectly successful we see from 1 Kings xxii. 46.

[2] The word is an ἅπαξ λεγόμενον. It is only applied to this grotesque and obscene figure (1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Chron. xv. 16).

[3] 2 Kings xi. 16, xxiii. 4, 6, 12; 2 Chron. xxix. 16, xxx. 14. Vulg., *in Sacris Priapi.* Jerome (*ad Hos.*, i. 4) calls Maachah's "horror" a *Simulacrum Priapi* (see Selden, *De Dis Syris Syntagma*, ii. 5).

and Baasha. In the eleventh year, however, according to the chronicler, "Zerach the Ethiopian"[1] attacked him with an army of *a million* Sushim and Lubim and three hundred chariots, and suffered an immense defeat in the valley of Zephathah, "the watch-tower" at Mareshah.[2] It was the sole occasion in sacred history in which an Israelite army met and defeated one of the great world powers in open battle, and it was deemed so remarkable a proof of Divine interposition that Asa, encouraged by the prophet Azariah, invited his people to renew their covenant with God.

More alarming to Asa was the action of Baasha in fortifying Ramah[3] in the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign. This was a veritable ἐπιτειχισμὸς of the most dangerous kind, for Ramah, in the heart of Benjamin, was only five miles north of Jerusalem. If Abijah's signal defeat of Jeroboam and capture of Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron be historical, these towns must not only have been speedily recovered, but Baasha had even pushed towards Jerusalem, five miles south of Bethel. Had Ramah been left undisturbed it would have been a thorn in the side of Judah, as Deceleia was in Attica, and Pylos in Messenia. Asa saw that

[1] 2 Chron. xvi. 8. Zarkh, perhaps Osorkhon I. (O-*serek*-on, "Ammon's darling"), was the feebler successor of Shesonk, Maspero, p. 362; Ewald, iii. 470. Shishak's army also consisted of Sushim and Lubim (2 Chron. xii. 3).

[2] The defeat had important consequences. Egypt did not again attack Palestine till three centuries later, under Pharaoh Nechoh (B.C. 609). The defeat weakened the Bubastite dynasty (Rawlinson, p. 36), though it continued to reign for two centuries. The "invasion" may have been a mere raid. The Pharaohs always seem to have degenerated from the founders of their dynasty, both in personal beauty and intellectual force.

[3] Josh. xviii. 25, now Er-Ram. No great importance can be attached to the dates, which are often self-contradictory.

the demolition of this fortress was a positive necessity. Since he was too weak to effect this, he stripped both his own palace and the Temple of the treasures with which he had himself enriched them, and sent them as a vast bribe to Benhadad I., King of Damascus, begging him to renew the treaty which had existed between their fathers, and to invade the kingdom of Baasha. This step shows to what a depth of weakness Judah had fallen, for Benhadad was a son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion (probably Rezon) of Damascus;[1] so that here we have the great-grandson of Solomon stripping Solomon's Temple of its consecrated vessels wherewith to bribe the grandson of the petty rebel freebooter, whose whole present kingdom had once been a part of Solomon's dominions! The policy was successful. It is easy for us now to condemn it as unpatriotic and short-sighted, but to Asa it seemed a matter of life or death. Benhadad invaded Israel, and mastered its territory in the tribe of Naphtali, from Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah on the waters of Merom[2] down to Chinnereth or the Lake of Gennesareth.[3] Baasha in alarm abandoned his attempt to blockade Jerusalem, and retired to Tirzah for the protection of his own kingdom. Thereupon Asa proclaimed a levy

[1] Ben-Hadad, "son of Hadad," the Sun-god (Macrob., *Saturn*, i. 24). Tabrimmon, "Rimmon is good." According to Sayce (*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 42), Rimmon—an Accadian name, which became, in Semitic, Rammânu, "the exalted"—was identified by the Syrians with the Sun-god Hadad, whom Shahmanaser called *Dada*. In Assyrian *Dadu* ("dear child") is akin to David and to Dido.

[2] Ijon is probably Merj Ayion, "the meadow of the House of Maachah"; called also, Abel-maim, "the meadow of the waters"; "a city and a mother in Israel" (2 Sam. xx. 19); now Abil in the Ard-el-Huleh.

[3] See Numb. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xiii. 27.

of all Judah to seize and dismantle Ramah, and with the ample materials which Baasha had amassed he fortified Geba to the north of Ramah[1] and Mizpah (probably Neby Samwyl, to the north of the Mount of Olives), where he also sank a deep well for the use of the garrison.[2] He thus effectually protected the frontier of Benjamin. He built, as Bossuet says, "the fortresses of Judah out of the ruins of those of Samaria," and thus set us the example of making holy use of hostile and heretical materials. We should have thought that the invitation of Benhadad was, in a worldly point of view, brilliantly successful, and that it saved the kingdom of Judah from utter ruin. It involved, however, a dangerous precedent, and Hanani rebuked Asa for having done foolishly.

After a powerful and useful reign Asa was attacked with gout in his feet two years before his death. The chronicler reproaches him for seeking "not to Jehovah but to the physicians" in his "exceeding great disease." If this was a sin, it is one of which we are unable to estimate the sinfulness from this meagre notice. It has been conjectured that it may have some reference to the name Asa, which, if written Asjah, might mean "whom Jehovah heals."[3] It belongs, however, to the theocratic standpoint of the chronicler, who condemns everything which bears the aspect of a worldly policy. He slept with his fathers in a tomb which he had built for himself, and was buried with unusual magnificence, amid the burning of many spices.

We are not surprised that the historian should not

[1] Josh. xxi. 17; 2 Kings xxiii. 8.

[2] LXX., ἡ σκοπία. Jer. xli. 5-9. Into this well Ishmael flung the corpses of the murdered adherents of Gedaliah.

[3] Renan, *Hist. du Peuple Israel*, ii. 248. Comp. Rephaiah.

mention the invasion of Zerah, since he refers us for the wars of Asa to the Judæan annals. It is much more remarkable that he wholly omits all reference to the prophetic activity of which the chronicler speaks as exercised in this reign. He had evidently formed a very high estimate of Asa, with none of the shadows and drawbacks which in the later annalist seemed to point to a marked degeneracy of character in his later days. On the favourable side the historian does not mention the high and eulogistic encouragement which the king received from Azariah, the son of Oded; nor the multitude which joined him out of Israel; nor the cities which he took from the hill country of Ephraim; nor his restoration of the altar. He even passes over the solemn league and covenant which he made with Judah and Benjamin and many members of the Ten Tribes in his fifteenth year, at a festival celebrated with an immense sacrifice, and with shouting and trumpets and cornets and a great exultant oath.[1] On the unfavourable side he does not tell us that Hanani the Seer rebuked him for summoning the help of the Syrians instead of relying on Jehovah; and that Asa "was in a rage because of this thing, and shut up Hanani in the House of the Stocks," and "oppressed some of the people at the same time," apparently because they took part with the prophet.[2] For none of these events does the chronicler refer us to any ancient authority. They came from separate records, perhaps written in prophetic commentaries and unknown to the compiler of the Kings. But whatever may have been the failings or shortcomings of Asa it is clear that he must be ranked among the more eminent and righteous sovereigns of Judah.

[1] 2 Chron. xv. 1-15.

[2] 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 10.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JEHOSHAPHAT.

1 KINGS xxii. 41—50.

BEFORE we leave the House of David we must speak of Jehoshaphat, the last king of Judah whose reign is narrated in the First Book of Kings. He was abler, more powerful, and more faithful to Jehovah than any of his predecessors, and was alone counted worthy in later ages to rank with Hezekiah and Josiah among the most pious rulers of the Davidic line. The annals of his reign are found chiefly in the Second Book of Chronicles, where his story occupies four long chapters. The First Book of Kings compresses all record of him into nine verses, except so far as his fortunes are commingled with the history of Ahab. But both accounts show us a reign which contributed as greatly to the prosperity of Judah as that of Jeroboam II. contributed to the prosperity of Israel.

He ascended the throne at the age of thirty-five. He was apparently the only son of Asa, by Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi; for Asa, greatly to his credit, seems to have been the first king of Judah who set his face against the monstrous polygamy of his predecessors, and, so far as we know, contented himself with a single wife. He received the high eulogy that "he turned not

aside from doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord," with the customary qualification that, nevertheless, the people still burnt incense and offerings at the *Bamoth*, which were not taken away. The chronicler says that he *did* take them away. This stock contradiction between the two authorities must be accounted for either by a contrast between the effort and its failure, or by a distinction between idolatrous *Bamoth* and those dedicated to the worship of Jehovah to which the people clung with the deep affection which local sanctuaries inspire.

To the historians of the Book of Kings the central fact of Jehoshaphat's history is that "he made peace with the King of Israel." As a piece of ordinary statesmanship no step could have been more praiseworthy. The sixty-eight years or more which had elapsed since the divinely-suggested choice of Jeroboam by the Northern Kingdom had tended to soften old exasperations. The kingdom of Israel was now an established fact, and nothing had become more obvious than that the past could not be undone. Meanwhile the threatening spectre of Syria, under the dynasty of Benhadad, was beginning to throw a dark shadow over both kingdoms. It had become certain that, if they continued to destroy each other by internecine warfare, both would succumb to the foreign invader. Wisely, therefore, and kindly Jehoshaphat determined to make peace with Ahab, in about the eighth year after his accession; and this policy he consistently maintained to the close of his twenty-five years' reign.

No one surely could blame him for putting an end to an exhaustive civil war between brethren. Indeed, in so doing he was but carrying out the policy which had been dictated to Rehoboam by the prophet Shemaiah,

when he forbade him to attempt the immense expedition which he had prepared to annihilate Jeroboam. Peace was necessary to the development and happiness of both kingdoms, but even more so to the smaller and weaker, threatened as it was not only by the more distant menace of Syria, but by the might of Egypt on the south and the dangerous predatory warfare of Edom and Moab on the east.

But Jehoshaphat went further than this. He cemented the new peace by an alliance between his young son Jehoram and Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who was then perhaps under fifteen years of age.

Later chroniclers formed their moral estimates by a standard which did not exist so many centuries before the date at which they wrote. If we are to judge the conduct of these kings truthfully we must take an unbiassed view of their conduct. We adopt this principle when we try to understand the characters of saints and patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or judges and prophets like Gideon, Deborah, and Samuel; and in general we must not sweepingly condemn the holy men of old because they lacked the full illumination of the gospel. We must be guided by a spirit of fairness if we desire to form a true conception of the kings who lived in the ninth century before Christ. It is probable that the religious gulf between the kings of Judah and Israel was not so immense as on a superficial view it might appear to be; indeed, the balance seems to be in favour of Jeroboam as against Abijam, Rehoboam, or even Solomon. The worship of the golden symbols at Dan and Bethel did not appear half so heinous to the people of Judah as it does to us. Even in the Temple they had cherubim and oxen. The *Bamoth* to Chemosh, Milcom, and Astarte glittered before them undisturbed on the

summit of Olivet, and abominations which they either tolerated or could not remove sheltered themselves in the very precincts of the Temple, under the shadows of its desecrated trees. To the pious Jehoshaphat the tolerance of Baal-worship by Ahab could hardly appear more deadly than the tolerance of Chemosh-worship by his great-great-grandfather, and the permission of *Asherim* and *Chammanim* by his grandfather, to say nothing of the phallic horror openly patronised by the queen-mother who was a granddaughter of David. That Ahab himself was a worshipper of Jehovah is sufficiently proved by the fact that he had given the name of Athaliah to the young princess whose hand Jehoshaphat sought for his son, and the name of Ahaziah ("Jehovah taketh hold") to the prince who was to be his heir. Jehoshaphat acted from policy; but so has every king done who has ever reigned. He could neither be expected to see these things with the illumination of a prophet, nor to read—as later writers could do in the light of history—the awful issues involved in an alliance which looked to him so necessary and so advantageous.

At the time of the proposed alliance there seems to have been no protest—at any rate, none of which we read. Micaiah alone among the prophets uttered his stern warning when the expedition to Ramoth Gilead was actually on foot, and Jehu, son of Hanani, went out to rebuke Jehoshaphat at the close of that disastrous enterprise. It is to the history attributed to this seer and embodied in the annals of Israel that the chronicler refers. "Shouldst thou help the wicked," asked the bold prophet, "and love them that hate the Lord? For this thing wrath is upon thee from the Lord. Nevertheless, there are good things found in

thee, in that thou hast put away the Asheroth out of the land, and hast set thy heart to seek God."

The moral principle which Jehu, son of Hanani, here enunciated is profoundly true. It was terribly emphasised by the subsequent events. A just and wise forecast may have sanctioned the restoration of peace, but Jehoshaphat might at least have learnt enough to avoid affinity with a queen who, like Jezebel, had introduced frightful and tyrannous iniquities into the House of Ahab. Faithful as the King of Judah evidently intended to be to the law of Jehovah, he should have hesitated before forming such close bonds of connexion with the cruel daughter of the usurping Tyrian priest. His error hardly diminished the warmth of that glowing eulogy which even the chronicler pronounces upon him; but it brought upon his kingdom, and upon the whole family of his grandchildren, overwhelming misery and all but total extermination. The rules of God's moral government are written large on the story of nations, and the consequences of our actions come upon us not arbitrarily, but in accordance with universal laws. When we err, even though our error be leniently judged and fully pardoned, the human consequences of the deeds which we have done may still come flowing over us with the resistless march of the ocean tides.

> "You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us.
> We sin: God's intimations rather fail
> In clearness than in energy."

Jehoshaphat did not live to see the ultimate issues of massacre and despotism which came in the train of his son Jehoram's marriage.[1] Perhaps to him it wore the

[1] Following the precedent set by Rehoboam, he established his six younger sons in castles and fenced cities. Athaliah must have found it difficult to exterminate their families if she attempted this.

golden aspect which it wears in the forty-fifth Psalm, which, as some have imagined, was composed on this occasion. But he had abundant proof that close relationship for mutual offence and defence with the kings of Israel brought no blessing in its train. In the expedition against Ramoth Gilead when Ahab was slain, he too very nearly lost his life. Even this did not disturb his alliance with Ahab's son Ahaziah, with whom he joined in a maritime enterprise which, like its predecessors, turned out to be a total failure.

Jehoshaphat in his successful wars had established the supremacy over Edom which had been all but lost in the days of Solomon. The Edomite Hadad and his successors had not been able to hold their own, and the present kings of Edom were deputies or vassals under the suzerainty of Judæa.[1] This once more opened the path to Elath and Ezion-Geber on the gulf of Akaba. Jehoshaphat, in his prosperty, felt a desire to revive the old costly commerce of Solomon with Ophir for gold, sandal wood, and curious animals. For this purpose he built "ships of Tarshish," *i.e.*, merchant ships, like those used for the Phœnician trade between Tyre and Tartessus, to go this long voyage. The ships, however, were wrecked on the reefs of Ezion-Geber, for the Jews were timid and inexperienced mariners. Hearing of this disaster, according to the Book of Kings, Ahaziah made an offer to Jehoshaphat to make the enterprise a joint one,—thinking, apparently, that the Israelites, who, perhaps, held Joppa and some of the ports on the coast, would bring more skill and knowledge to bear on the result. But Jehoshaphat had had enough of an attempt which was so dangerous

[1] The Nitzab or Præfect of Edom was allowed the barren title of king.

and which offered no solid advantages. He declined Ahaziah's offer. The story of these circumstances in the chronicler is different. He speaks as if from the first it was a joint experiment of the two kings, and says that, after the wreck of the fleet, a prophet of whom we know nothing, "Eliezer, the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah,"[1] prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, Jehovah hath made a breach in thy works." The passage shows that the word "prophesied" was constantly used in the sense of "preached," and did not necessarily imply any prediction of events yet future. The chronicler, however, apparently makes the mistake of supposing that ships were built at Ezion-Geber on the Red Sea to sail to Tartessus in Spain![2] The earlier and better authority says correctly that these merchantmen were built to trade with Ophir, in India, or Arabia. The chronicler seems to have been unaware that "ships of Tarshish," like our "Indiamen," was a general title for vessels of a special build.[3]

We see enough in the Book of Kings to show the greatness and goodness of Jehoshaphat, and later on

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 37. His name faintly recalls that of Eleazar, son of Dodo (2 Sam. xxiii. 9). Dodavahu means "friend of God"

[2] 2 Chron. xx. 36, 37. It would be monstrous to send ships to circumnavigate Africa in order to reach Tartessus. The last resource of the harmonists (*e.g.*, Keil) to save the accuracy of the chronicler is to suppose that Jehoshaphat meant to drag the whole fleet across the Isthmus of Suez, and so to sail from one of the havens of Palestine!

[3] "Cette version," says Munk (*Palestine*, p. 314), "a probablement pris naissance dans l'esprit de rigorisme qui animait plus tard les écrivans Juifs." "This," says Dr. Robertson Smith, "is a mere pragmatical inference from the story in Kings." See his further remarks in *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, chap. ii., p. 146. He regards parts of the Books of Chronicles as being, in fact, a Jewish *Midrash*. "It is not History, but *Haggada*, moralising romance. And

we shall hear details of his military expeditions.[1] The chronicler, glorifying him still more, says that he sent princes and Levites and priests to teach the Book of the Law throughout all the cities of Judah; that he received large presents and tribute from neighbouring peoples; that he built castles and stone cities; and that he had a stupendous army of 160,000 troops under four great generals. He also narrates that when an immense host of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunim came against him to Hazezon-Tamar or Engedi, he took his stand before the people in the Temple in front of the new court and prayed. Thereupon the Spirit of the Lord came upon "Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah the Levite, of the sons of Asaph," who told them that the next day they should go against the invader, but that they need not strike a blow. The battle was God's, not theirs. All they had to do was to stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah. On hearing this the king and all his people prostrated themselves, and the Levites stood up to praise God. Next morning Jehoshaphat told his people to believe God and His prophets and they should prosper, and bade them chant the verse, "Give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever," which now forms the refrain of Psalm cxxxvi.[2] On this Jehovah "set liers in wait against

the chronicler himself gives the name of *Midrash* (R.V., 'story') to two of the sources from which he drew (2 Chron. xiii. 22, xxiv. 27), so that there is really no mystery as to the nature of the work when it departs from the old canonical histories" (p. 148).

[1] We shall have further glimpses of Jehoshaphat in the reigns of Ahab and even of Jehoram.

[2] See 1 Chron. xvi. 34; 2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 3, xx. 21; Psalms cvi., cvii., cxviii., etc. The eighty-third Psalm may owe its origin to this deliverance, and Hengstenberg thinks Psalms xlvii. and xlviii. also.

the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir." Intestine struggles arose among the invaders. The inhabitants of Mount Seir were first destroyed, and the rest then turned their swords against each other until they were all "dead bodies fallen to the earth." The soldiers of Jehoshaphat despoiled these corpses for three days, and on the fourth assembled themselves in the valley of Beracah ("Blessing"), which received its name from their tumultuous rejoicings.[1] After this they returned to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets, and God gave Jehoshaphat rest from all his enemies round about. Of all this the historian of the Kings tells us nothing. Jehoshaphat died full of years and honours, leaving seven sons, of whom the eldest was Jehoram.[2] His reign marks a decisive triumph of the prophetic party. The prophets not only felt a fiercely just abhorrence of the abominations of Canaanite idolatry, but wished to establish a theocracy to the exclusion on the one hand of all local and symbolic worship, and on the other of all reliance on worldly policy. Up to this time, as Dean Stanley says in his usual strikingly picturesque manner, "if there was a 'holy city,' there was also an 'unholy city' within the walls of Sion. It was like a seething caldron of blood and froth 'whose scum is therein and whose scum has not gone out of it.' The Temple was hemmed in by dark idolatries on every side. Mount Olivet was covered with heathen sanctuaries, monumental stones, and pillars of Baal. Wooden images of Astarte under the sacred trees, huge images of Molech appeared at every turn in the walks around Jerusalem."[3] Jehosha-

[1] The title "valley of Jehoshaphat" is thought also to have derived its origin from these events. Comp. Joel iii. 2.

[2] 2 Chron. xxi. 2, 3. [3] There is a little exaggeration here.

phat introduced a decisive improvement into the conditions which prevailed under Rehoboam and Abijah, but practically the conflict between light and darkness goes on for ever. It was in days when Jerusalem had come to be regarded by herself and by all nations as exceptionally holy, that she, who had been for centuries the murderess of the prophets, became under her priestly religionists the murderess of the Christ, and—far different in God's eyes from what she was in her own—deserved the dreadful stigma of being "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL FROM ZIMRI TO AHAB.

B.C. 889—877.

1 KINGS xvi. 11—34.

AS far as we can understand from our meagre authorities—and we have no independent source of information—we infer that Elah, son of the powerful Baasha, was a self-indulgent weakling. The army of Israel was encamped against Gibbethon—originally a Levitical town of the Kohathites, in the territory of Dan—which they hoped to wrest from the Philistines. It was during the interminable and intermittent siege of this town that Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, had been murdered. Whatever may have been his sins, he was in his proper place leading the armies of Israel. Elah was not there, but in his beautiful palace at Tirzah. It was probably contempt for his incapacity and the bad example of Baasha's successful revolt, that tempted Zimri to murder him as he was drinking himself drunk in the house of his chamberlain Arza. Zimri was a commander of half the chariots, and probably thinking that he could secure the throne by a *coup de main* he slew not only Elah, but every male member of his family. To extinguish any possibility of vengeance, he even massacred all who were known to be friends of the royal house.

It was a consummate crime, and it was followed by swift and condign judgment. Through that sea of blood Zimri only succeeded in wading to one week's royalty, followed by a shameful and agonising death. We are told that he did evil in the sight of the Lord by following the sin of Jeroboam's calf-worship. The phrase must be here something of a formula, for in seven days he could hardly have achieved a religious revolution, and every other king of Israel, some of whom have long and prosperous reigns, maintained the unauthorised worship. But Zimri's atrocious revolt had been so ill-considered that it furnished a proverb of the terrible fate of rebels.[1] He had not even attempted to secure the assent of the army at Gibbethon. No sooner did the news reach the camp than the soldiers tumultuously refused to accept Zimri as king, and elected Omri their captain. Omri instantly broke up the camp, and led them to besiege the new king in Tirzah. Zimri saw that his cause was hopeless, and took refuge in the fortress (*birah*) attached to the palace.[2] When he saw that even there he could not maintain himself, he preferred speedy death to slow starvation or falling into the hands of his rival. He set fire to the palace, and, like Sardanapalus, perished in the flames.[3]

The swift suppression of his treason did not save the unhappy kingdom from anarchy and civil war. However popular Omri might be with the army, he was unacceptable to a large part of the people. They

[1] 2 Kings ix. 31.

[2] R.V., "the *castle* of the king's house."

[3] Justin, *Hist.*, i. 3; cf. Herod., i. 176, vii. 107; Liv., xxi. 14. Ewald elaborates out of his own consciousness an extraordinary romance about Zimri and the queen-mother.

chose as their king a certain Tibni, son of Ginath, who was supported by a powerful brother named Joram. For four years the contest was continued. At the end of that time Tibni and Joram were conquered and killed,[1] and Omri began his sole reign, which lasted eight years longer.

He founded the most conspicuous dynasty of Israel, and so completely identified his name with the Northern Kingdom that it was known to the Assyrians as Beit-Khumri, or "the House of Omri."[2] They even speak of Jehu the destroyer of Omri's dynasty, as "the son of Omri."

Incidental allusions in the annals of his son show that Omri was engaged in incessant wars against Syria. He was unsuccessful, and Benhadad robbed him of Ramoth Gilead and other cities, enforcing the right of Syrians to have streets of their own even in his new capital of Samaria.[3] On the other hand, he was greatly successful on the south-east against the Moabites and their warrior-king Chemosh-Gad, the father of Mesha.

Few details of either war have come down to us.[4] We learn, however, from the famous Moabite stone that he began his assault on Moab by the capture of Mediba, several miles south of Heshbon, overran the country, made the king a vassal, and imposed on Moab the enormous annual tribute of 100,000 sheep and 100,000 rams.[5] Mesha in his inscription records that

[1] Josephus (*Antt.*, VIII. xii. 5) says that Tibni was assassinated, as does the Rabbinic *Seder Olam Rabba*, chap. xvii. LXX., καὶ ἀπέθανε Θαβνὶ καὶ Ἰωρὰμ ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ.

[2] Athaliah is called "the daughter of Omri."

[3] The Aramæans have come to be incorrectly called Syrians because the Greeks confused them with the Assyrians.

[4] 1 Kings xx. 34.

[5] 2 Kings iii. 4.

Omri "oppressed Moab many days," and attributed this to the fact that Chemosh was angry with his chosen people.

He stamped his impress deep upon his subjects. It must have been to him that the alliance with the Tyrians was due, which in his son's reign produced consequences so momentous. He "did worse we are told than all the kings that were before him."[1] Although he is only charged with walking in the way of Jeroboam, the indignant manner in which the prophet Micah speaks of "the statutes of Omri" as still being kept,[2] seems to prove that his influence on religion was condemned by the prophetic order on special grounds. It is clear that he was a sovereign of far greater eminence and importance than we might suppose from the meagreness of his annals as here preserved; indeed, for thirty-four years after his accession the history of the Southern Kingdom becomes a mere appendix to that of the Northern.

One conspicuous service he rendered to his subjects by providing them with the city which became their permanent and famous capital. This he did in the sixth year of his reign. The burning of the fortress-palace of Tirzah, and the rapidity with which the town had succumbed to its besiegers, may have led him to look out for a site, which was central, strong, and beautiful. His choice was so prescient that the new royal residence superseded not only Penuel and Tirzah, but even Shechem. It was, says Dean Stanley, "as though Versailles had taken the place of Paris, or Windsor of London." He fixed his eye on an oblong hill, with long flat summit, which rose in the midst

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 25. [2] Micah vi. 16.

of a wide valley encircled with hills, near the edge of the plain of Sharon, and six miles north-west of Shechem. Its beauty is still the admiration of the traveller in Palestine. It gave point to the apostrophe of Isaiah: "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which is on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! . . The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under foot: and the fading flower of his glorious adornment, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall become as a fading flower and as an early fig."[1] All around it the low hills and rich ravines were clothed with fertility. They recall more nearly than any other scene in Palestine the green fields and parks of England.

It commanded a full view of the sea and the plain of Sharon on the one hand, and of the vale of Shechem on the other. The town sloped down from the summit of this hill; a broad wall with a terraced top ran round it. "In front of the gates was a wide open space or threshing floor, where the kings of Samaria sat on great occasions. The inferior houses were built of white brick, with rafters of sycomore, the grandeur of hewn stones and cedar (Isa. ix. 9, 10). Its soft, rounded, oblong platform was, as it were, a vast luxurious couch, in which the nobles securely rested, propped and cushioned up on both sides, as in the cherished corner of a rich divan."[2]

Far more important in the eyes of Omri than its beauty was the natural strength of its position. It did not possess the impregnable majesty of Jerusalem, but its height and isolation, permitting of strong fortifi-

[1] Isa. xxviii. 1-4.

[2] Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 242.

cations, enabled it to baffle the besieging hosts of the Aramæans in B.C. 901 and in B.C. 892. For three long years it held out against the mighty Assyrians under Sargon and Shalmanezer. Its capture in B.C. 721 involved the ruin of the whole kingdom in its fall.[1] Nebuchadnezzar took it in B.C. 554, after a siege of thirteen years. In later centuries it partially recovered. Alexander the Great took it, and massacred many of its inhabitants, B.C. 332. John Hyrcanus, who took it after a year's siege, tried to demolish it in B.C. 129. After various fortunes it was splendidly rebuilt by Herod the Great, who called it Sebaste, in honour of Augustus. It still exists under the name of Sebastïyeh.[2]

When Omri chose it for his residence it belonged to a certain Shemer, who, according to Epiphanius, was a descendant of the ancient Perizzites or Girgashites. The king paid for this hill the large sum of two talents of silver,[3] and called it Shomeron. The name means "a watch tower," and was appropriate both from its commanding position and because it echoed the name of its old possessor.[4]

The new capital marked a new epoch. It superseded as completely as Jerusalem had done the old local shrines endeared by the immemorial sanctity of their traditions; but as its origin was purely political it acted unfavourably on the religion of the people. It became a city of idolatry and of luxurious wealth; a city in which Baal-worship with its ritual pomp threw into the

[1] 1 Kings xx. 1; 2 Kings vi. 24.

[2] Josephus, *Antt.*, XV. vii. 7. One of the few instances in Palestine where the ancient name has been superseded by a more modern one. The early Assyrians call it Beth-Khumri, "House of Omri"; but the name Sammerin occurs in the monument of Tiglath-Pileser II.

[3] About £800 of our money.

[4] LXX., Σκοπία; שָׁמַר, "to watch."

shade the worship of Jehovah; a city in which corrupted nobles, lolling at wine feasts on rich divans in their palaces inlaid with ivory, sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes. Of Omri we are told no more. After a reign of twelve years he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city which was to be for so many centuries a memorial of his fame.

The name of Omri marks a new epoch. He is the first Jewish king whose name is alluded to in Assyrian inscriptions. Assyria had emerged into importance in the twelfth century before Christ under Tiglath-Pileser I., but during the eleventh and down to the middle of the tenth century it had sunk into inactivity. Assurbanipal, the father of Shalmanezer II. (884—860), enlarged his dominions to the Mediterranean westwards and to Lebanon southwards. In 870, when Ahab was king, the Assyrian warriors had exacted tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Biblos.[1] It is not impossible that Omri also had paid tribute, and it has even been conjectured that it was to Assyrian help that he owed his throne. The Book of Kings only alludes to the valour of this warrior-king in the one word "his might";[2] but it is evident from other indications that he had a stormy and chequered reign.

[1] Meyer, *Gesch. d. Alt.*, 331; Kittel, ii. 221; Schrader, *Keilinschr.*, i. 165.

[2] גְּבוּרָתוֹ (1 Kings xvi. 27):

BOOK IV.

AHAB AND ELIJAH.

B.C. 877—855.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

KING AHAB AND QUEEN JEZEBEL.

"Besides what that grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said."

LYCIDAS.

1 KINGS xvi. 29—34.

OMRI was succeeded by his son Ahab, whose eventful reign of upwards of twenty years[1] occupies so large a space even in these fragmentary records. His name means "brother-father," and has probably some sacred reference. He is stigmatised by the historians as a king more wicked than his father, though Omri had "done worse than all who were before him." That he was a brave warrior, and showed some great qualities during a long and on the whole prosperous career; that he built cities, and added to Israel yet another royal residence; that he advanced the wealth and prosperity of his subjects; that he was highly successful in some of his wars against Syria, and died in battle against those dangerous enemies of his country; that he maintained unbroken, and strengthened by yet closer affinity, the recent alliance with the Southern Kingdom,—all this goes for nothing with the prophetic annalists. They have no word of eulogy for the king who added Baal-worship to the sin

[1] It is needless in each separate case to enter into the chronological minutiæ about which the historian is little solicitous. A table of the chronology so far as it can be ascertained is furnished, *infra*.

of Jeroboam. The prominence of Ahab in their record is only due to the fact that he came into dreadful collision with the prophetic order, and with Elijah, the greatest prophet who had yet arisen. The glory and the sins of the warrior-king interested the young prophets of the schools solely because they were interwoven with the grand and sombre traditions of their mightiest reformer.

The historian traces all his ignominy and ruin to a disastrous alliance. The kings of Judah had followed the bad example of David and had been polygamists. Up to this time the kings of Israel seem to have been contented with a single wife. The wealth and power of Ahab led him to adopt the costly luxury of a harem, and he had seventy sons.[1] This, however, would have been regarded in those days as a venial offence, or as no offence at all; but just as the growing power of Solomon had been enhanced by marriage with a princess of Egypt, so Ahab was now of sufficient importance to wed a daughter of the King of Tyre. "As though it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians."

It was an act of policy in which religious considerations went for nothing. There is little doubt that it flattered his pride and the pride of his people, and that Jezebel brought riches with her and pomp and the prestige of luxurious royalty.[2] The Phœnicians were

[1] 1 Kings xx. 5; 2 Kings x. 7.

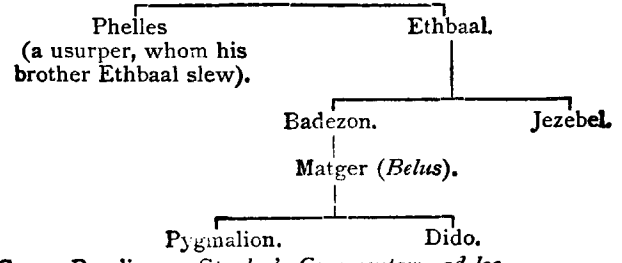
[2] Hitzig thinks that Psalm xlv. was an epithalamium on this occasion, from the mention of "ivory palaces" and "the daughter of Tyre." Had it been composed for the marriage of Solomon, or Jehoram and Athaliah, or any king of Judah, there would surely have been an allusion to Jerusalem. Moreover, the queen is called שֵׁנִית, which is

of the old race of Canaan, with whom all affinity was so strongly forbidden. Ethbaal—more accurately, perhaps, Itto-baal (Baal is with him)[1]—though he ruled all Phœnicia, both Tyre and Sidon, was a usurper, and had been the high priest of the great Temple of Ashtoreth in Tyre. Hiram, the friend of Solomon, had now been dead for half a century. The last king of his dynasty was the fratricide Phelles, whom in his turn his brother Ethbaal slew. He reigned for thirty-two years, and founded a dynasty which lasted for sixty-two years more. He was the seventh successor to the throne of Tyre in the fifty years which had elapsed since the death of Hiram. Menander of Ephesus, as quoted by Josephus, shows us that in the history of this family we find an interesting point of contact between sacred and classic history. Jezebel was the aunt of Virgil's Belus, and great-aunt of Pygmalion, and of Dido, the famous foundress of Carthage.[2]

a Chaldee (Dan. v. 2), or perhaps a North Palestine word. The word in Judah was Gebira.

[1] Ἰθόβαλος, Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 1; *c. Ap.*, I. 18 (quoting the heathen historian Menander of Ephesus). It may, however, be "Man of Baal," like Saul's son Ishbaal (Ishbosheth). In Tyre the high priest was only second to the king in power (Justin, *Hist.*, xviii. 4), and Ethbaal united both dignities. He died aged sixty-eight. Another Ethbaal was on the throne during the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar (Josephus, *Antt.*, X. xi. 1).

[2] Josephus, *c. Ap.*, I. 18. The genealogy is:—



See Canon Rawlinson, *Speaker's Commentary, ad loc.*

A king named after Baal, and who had named his daughter after Baal—a king whose descendants down to Maherbal and Hasdrubal and Hannibal bore the name of the Sun-god[1]—a king who had himself been at the head of the cult of Ashtoreth, the female deity who was worshipped with Baal—was not likely to rest content until he had founded the worship of his god in the realm of his son-in-law. Ahab, we are told, "went and served Baal and worshipped him." We must discount by recorded facts the impression which might *primâ facie* be left by these sweeping denunciations. It is certain that to his death Ahab continued to recognise Jehovah. He enshrined the name of Jehovah in the names of his children.[2] He consulted the prophets of Jehovah, and his continuance of the calf-worship met with no recorded reproof from the many true prophets who were active during his reign. The worship of Baal was due to nothing more than the unwise eclecticism which had induced Solomon to

[1] Plaut., *Pœnul.*, V. ii. 6, 7. Phœnician names abound in the element "Baal."

[2] Ahaziah ("Jehovah supports"), Jehoram ("Jehovah is exalted"), Athaliah (?). The word Baal merely meant "Lord"; and perhaps the fact that at one time it had been freely applied to Jehovah Himself may have helped to confuse the religious perceptions of the people. Saul, certainly no idolater, called his son Eshbaal ("the man of Baal"); and it was only the hatred of the name Baal in later times which led the Jews to alter Baal into Bosheth ("shame"), as in Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth. David himself had a son named Beeliada ("known to Baal"), which was altered into Eliada (1 Chron. xiv. 7, iii. 8; 2 Sam. v. 16; comp. 2 Chron. xvii. 17). We even find the name Bealiah ("Baal is Jah") as one of David's men (1 Chron. xii. 5). Hoshea too records that Baali ("my Lord") was used of Jehovah, but changed into Ishi ("my husband") (Hosea ii. 16, 17). It is used simply for owner ("the baal of an ox") in "the Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xxi. 28). See Robertson Smith, *Rel. of the Semites*, 92.

establish the *Bamoth* to heathen deities on the mount of offence. It is exceedingly probable that the permission of Baal-worship had been one of the articles of the treaty between Tyre and Israel, which, as we know from Amos, had been made at this time. It had probably been the condition on which the fanatical Phœnician usurper had conceded to his far less powerful neighbour the hand of his daughter. It was, as we see, alike in sacred and secular history a time of treaties. The menacing spectre of Assyria was beginning to terrify the nations. Hamath, Syria, and the Hittites had formed a league of defence against the northern power, and similar motives induced the kings of Israel to seek alliance with Phœnicia. Perhaps neither Omri nor Ahab grasped all the consequences of their concession to the Sidonian princess.[1] But such compacts were against the very essence of the religion of Israel, which was "Yahveh Israel's God, and Israel Yahveh's people."

The new queen inherited the fanaticism as she inherited the ferocity of her father. She acquired from the first a paramount sway over the weak and uxorious mind of her husband. Under her influence Ahab built in Samaria a splendid temple and altar to Baal, in which no less than four hundred orgiastic priests served the Phœnician idol in splendid vestments, and with the same pompous ritual as in the shrines at Tyre. In front of this temple, to the disgust and horror of all faithful worshippers of Jehovah, stood an *Asherah* in honour of the Nature-goddess, and *Matstseboth* pillars or obelisks which represented either sunbeams or the reproductive powers of nature. In these ways

[1] Ethbaal is called King of Sidon (1 Kings xvi. 31), and was also King of Tyre (Menander *ap.* Josephus, *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 1).

Ahab "did more to provoke the Lord God to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."[1] When we learn what Baal was, and how he was worshipped, we are not surprised at so stern a condemnation. Half Sun-god, half Bacchus, half Hercules, Baal was worshipped under the image of a bull, "the symbol of the male power of generation." In the wantonness of his rites he was akin to Peor; in their cruel atrocity to the kindred Moloch; in the demand for victims to be sacrificed to the horrible consecration of lust and blood he resembled the Minotaur, the wallowing "infamy of Crete," with its yearly tribute of youths and maidens. What the combined worship of Baal and Asherah was like—and by Jezebel with Ahab's connivance they were now countenanced in Samaria—we may learn from the description of their temple at Apheka.[2] It confirms what we are incidentally told of Jezebel's devotions. It abounded in wealthy gifts, and its multitude of priests, women, and mutilated ministers—of whom Lucian counted three hundred at one sacrifice—were clad in splendid vestments. Children were sacrificed by being put in a leathern bag and flung down from the top of the temple, with the shocking expression that "they were calves, not children." In the forecourt stood two gigantic phalli. The *Galli* were maddened into a tumult of excitement by the uproar of drums, shrill pipes, and clanging cymbals, gashed themselves with knives and potsherds, and often ran

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 23; 2 Kings iii. 2, x. 27.

[2] *Asherim* seem to be upright wooden stocks of trees in honour of the Nature-goddess Asheroth. The Temple of Baal at Tyre had no image, only two *Matstseboth*, one of gold given by Hiram, one of "emerald" (Dius and Menander *ap.* Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. v. 3, *Ap.*, I. 18; Herod., ii. 66).

through the city in women's dress.[1] Such was the new worship with which the dark murderess insulted the faith in Jehovah. Could any condemnation be too stern for the folly and faithlessness of the king who sanctioned it?

A consequence of this tolerance of polluted forms of worship seems to have shown itself in defiant contempt for sacred traditions. At any rate, it is in this connexion that we are told how Hiel of Bethel set at naught an ancient curse. After the fall of Jericho Joshua had pronounced a curse upon the site of the city. It was never to be rebuilt, but to remain under the ban of God. The site, indeed, had not been absolutely uninhabited, for its importance near the fords of Jordan necessitated the existence of some sort of caravanserai in or near the spot.[2] At this time it belonged to the kingdom of Israel, though it was in the district of Benjamin and afterwards reverted to Judah.[3] Hiel, struck by the opportunities afforded by its position, laughed the old *cherem* to scorn, and determined to rebuild Jericho into a fortified and important city. But men remarked with a shudder that the curse had not been uttered in vain. The laying of the foundation was marked by the death of his firstborn Abiram, the completion of the gates by the death of Segub, his youngest son.[4]

The shadow of Queen Jezebel falls dark for many years over the history of Israel and Judah. She was one of those masterful, indomitable, implacable women

[1] Döllinger, *Judenth. u. Heidenthum* (E. T.), i. 425-29.
[2] 2 Sam. x. 5; Judg. iii. 28.
[3] 2 Chron. xxviii. 15.
[4] Comp. Josh. vi. 26; 2 Sam. x. 5.

who, when fate places them in exalted power, leave a terrible mark on the annals of nations. What the Empress Irene was in the history of Constantinople, or the "She-wolf of France" in that of England, or Catherine de Medicis in that of France, that Jezebel was in the history of Palestine. The unhappy Juana of Spain left a physical trace upon her descendants in the perpetuation of the huge jaw which had gained her the soubriquet of *Maultasch*; but the trace left by Jezebel was marked in blood in the fortunes of the children born to her. Already three of the six kings of Israel had been murdered, or had come to evil ends; but the fate of Ahab and his house was most disastrous of all, and it became so through the "whoredoms and witchcrafts" of his Sidonian wife. A thousand years later the name of Jezebel was still ominous as that of one who seduced others into fornication and idolatry.[1] If no king so completely "sold himself to work wickedness" as Ahad, it was because "Jezebel his wife stirred him up."[2]

Yet, however guilty may have been the uxorious apostasies of Ahab, he can hardly be held to be responsible for the marriage itself. The dates and ages recorded for us show decisively that the alliance must have been negotiated by Omri, for it took place in his reign and when Ahab was too young to have much voice in the administration of the kingdom. He is only responsible for abdicating his proper authority over Jezebel, and for permitting her a free hand in the corruption of worship, while he gave himself up to his schemes of worldly aggrandisement. Absorbed in the strengthening of his cities and the embellishment of his ivory palaces, he became neglectful of the worship

[1] Rev. ii. 20. [2] 1 Kings xxi. 25, 26.

of Jehovah, and careless of the more solemn and sacred duties of a theocratic king.

The temple to Baal at Samaria was built; the hateful Asherah in front of it offended the eyes of all whose hearts abhorred an impure idolatry. Its priests and the priests of Astarte were the favourites of the court. Eight hundred and fifty of them fed in splendour at Jezebel's table, and the pomp of their sensuous cult threw wholly into the shade the worship of the God of Israel. Hitherto there had been no protest against, no interference with the course of evil. It had been suffered to reach its meridian unchecked, and it seemed only a question of time that the service of Jehovah would yield to that of Baal, to whose favour the queen probably believed that her priestly father had owed his throne. There are indications that Jezebel had gone further still, and that Ahab, however much he may secretly have disapproved, had not interfered to prevent her. For although we do not know the exact period at which Jezebel began to exercise violence against the worshippers of Jehovah, it is certain that she did so. This crime took place before the great famine which was appointed for its punishment, and which roused from cowardly torpor the supine conscience of the king and of the nation. Jezebel stands out on the page of sacred history as the first supporter of *religious persecution.* We learn from incidental notices that, not content with insulting the religion of the nation by the burdensome magnificence of her idolatrous establishments, she made an attempt to crush Jehovah-worship altogether. Such fanaticism is a frequent concomitant of guilt. She is the authentic authoress of priestly inquisitions.

The Borgian monster, Pope Alexander VI., who

founded the Spanish Inquisition, is the lineal inheritor of the traditions of Jezebel. Had Ahab done no more than Solomon had done in Judah, the followers of the true faith in Israel would have been as deeply offended as those of the Southern Kingdom. They would have hated a toleration which they regarded as wicked, because it involved moral corruption as well as the danger of national apostasy. Their feelings would have been even more wrathful than were stirred in the hearts of English Puritans when they heard of the Masses in the chapel of Henrietta Maria, or saw Father Petre gliding about the corridors of Whitehall. But their opposition was crushed with a hand of iron. Jezebel, strong in her *entourage* of no less than eight hundred and fifty priests, to say nothing of her other attendants, audaciously broke down the altars of Jehovah—even the lonely one on Mount Carmel—and endeavoured so completely to extirpate all the prophets of Jehovah that Elijah regarded himself as the sole prophet that was left. Those who escaped her fury had to wander about in destitution, and to hide in dens and caves of the earth.

The apostasy of Churches always creeps on apace, when priests and prophets, afraid of malediction, and afraid of imperilling their worldly interests become cowards, opportunists, and time-servers, and not daring to speak out the truth that is in them, suffer the cause of spirituality and righteousness to go by default. But 'when Iniquity hath played her part, Vengeance, leaps upon the stage. The comedy is short, but the tragedy is long. The black guard shall attend upon you: you shall eat at the table of sorrow, and the crown of death shall be upon your heads, many glittering faces looking upon you."[1]

[1] Henry Smith, *The Trumpet of the Lord sounding to Judgment.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ELIJAH.

1 KINGS xvii. 1—7.

"And Elias the prophet stood up as fire, and his word was burning as a torch."—ECCLUS. xlviii. 1.

"But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

Lycidas.

MANY chapters are now occupied with narratives of the deeds of two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, remarkable for the blaze and profusion of miracles and for similarity in many details. For thirty-four years we hear but little of Judah, and the kings of Israel are overshadowed by the "men of God." Both narratives, of which the later in sequence seems to be the earlier in date, originated in the Schools of the Prophets. Both are evidently drawn from documentary sources apart from the ordinary annals of the Kings.

Doubtless something of their fragmentariness is due to the abbreviation of the prophetic annals by the historians.

Suddenly, with abrupt impetuosity, the mighty figure of Elijah the Prophet bursts upon the scene like lightning on the midnight. So far as the sacred page is concerned, he, like Melchizedek, is "without father, without mother, without descent." He appears before us unannounced as "Elijah the Tishbite of the inhabitants of Gilead." Such a phenomenon as Jezebel explains and necessitates such a phenomenon as Elijah.

"The loftiest and sternest spirit of the true faith is raised up," says Dean Stanley, "face to face with the proudest and fiercest spirit of the old Asiatic Paganism."

The name Elijah, or, in its fuller and more sonorous Hebrew form, Elijahu, means "Jehovah is my God." Who he was is entirely unknown. So completely is all previous trace of him lost in mystery that Talmudic legends confounded him with Phinehas, the son of Aaron, the avenging and fiercely zealous priest; and even identified him with the angel or messenger of Jehovah who appeared to Gideon and ascended in the altar flame.

The name "Tishbite" tells us nothing. No town of Tishbi occurs in Scripture, and though a Thisbe in the tribe of Naphtali is mentioned as the birthplace of Tobit,[1] the existence of such a place is as doubtful as that of "Thesbon of the Gileadite district" to which Josephus assigns his birth.[2] The Hebrew may mean "the Tishbite from Tishbi of Gilead," or "*The sojourner from the sojourners of Gilead*"; and we know no more. Elijah's grandeur is in himself alone. Perhaps he was by birth an Ishmaelite. When the wild Highlander in Rob Roy says of himself "I am a man," "A man!" repeated Frank Osbaldistone; "that is a very brief description." "It will serve," answered the outlaw, "for one who has no other to give. He who is without

[1] Tobit i. 2.

[2] Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 2; Vat. (LXX.), Θεσβίτης ὁ ἐκ Θεσβῶν. The Alex. LXX. omits Θεσβίτης. An immense amount has been written about Elijah. Among others, see Knobel, *Der Prophetismus*, ii. 73; Köster *Der Thesbiter*; Stanley, ii., lect. xxx.; Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, serm. viii.; F. W. Robertson, ii., serm. vi.; Milligan, *Elijah* (Men of the Bible).

name, without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man: and he that has all these is no more." So Elijah stands alone in the towering height of his fearless manhood.

Some clue to the swift mysterious movements, the rough asceticism, the sheepskin robe, the unbending sternness of the Prophet may lie in the notice that he was a Gileadite, or at any rate among the sojourners of Gilead, and therefore akin to them. It might even be conjectured that he was of Kenite origin, like Jonadab, the son of Rechab, in the days of Jehu.[1] The Gileadites were the Highlanders of Palestine, and the name of their land implies its barren ruggedness.[2] They, like the modern Druses, were

"Fierce, hardy, proud, in conscious freedom bold."

We catch a glimpse of these characteristics in the notice of the four hundred Gadites who swam the Jordan in Palestine to join the freebooters of David in the cave of Adullam, "whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were as swift as the roes upon the mountains." Though of Israelitish origin they were closely akin to the Bedawin, swift, strong, temperate, fond of the great solitudes of nature, haters of cities, scorners of the softnesses of civilisation. Elijah shared these characteristics. Like the forerunner of Christ, in whom his spirit reappeared nine centuries later, he had lived alone with God in the glowing deserts and the mountain fastnesses. He found Jehovah's presence, not in the

"Gay religions, full of pomp and gold,"

which he misdoubted and despised, but in the barren

[1] See 1 Chron. ii. 55.
[2] See Cheyne, *The Hallowing of Criticism*, p. 9.

hills and wild ravines and bleak uplands where only here and there roamed a shepherd with his flock. In such hallowed loneliness he had learnt to fear man little, because he feared God much, and to dwell familiarly on the sterner aspects of religion and morality. The one conscious fact of his mission, the sufficient authentication of his most imperious mandates, was that "he stood before Jehovah." So unexpected were his appearances and disappearances, that in the popular view he only seemed to flash to and fro, or to be swept hither and thither, by the Spirit of the Lord. We may say of him as was said of John the Baptist, that "in his manifestation and agency he was like a burning torch; his public life was quite an earthquake; the whole man was a sermon, the voice of one crying in the wilderness." And, like the Baptist, he had been "in the deserts, till the day of his showing unto Israel."

Somewhere—perhaps at Samaria, perhaps in the lovely summer palace at Jezreel—he suddenly strode into the presence of Ahab. Coming to him as the messenger of the King of kings he does not deign to approach him with the genuflexions and sounding titles which Nathan used to the aged David. With scanted courtesy to one whom he does not respect or dread—knowing that he is in God's hands, and has no time to waste over courtly periphrases or personal fears—he comes before Ahab unknown, unintroduced. What manner of man was it by whom the king in his crown and Tyrian purple was thus rudely confronted? He was, tradition tells us, a man of short stature, of rugged countenance. He was "a lord of hair"—the thick black locks of the Nazarite (for such he probably was) streamed over his shoulders like a lion's mane, giving him a fierce and unkempt aspect.

They that wear soft clothing are in king's houses, and doubtless under a queen who, even in old age, painted her face and tired her head, and was given to Sidonian luxuries, Ahab was accustomed to see men about him in bright apparel. But Elijah had not stooped to alter his ordinary dress, which was the dress of the desert by which he was always known. His brown limbs, otherwise bare, were covered with a heavy mantle, the skin of a camel or a sheep worn with the rough wool outside, and tightened round his loins by a leathern girdle. So unusual was his aspect in the cities east of Jordan, accustomed since the days of Solomon to all the refinements of Egyptian and Phœnician culture, that it impressed and haunted the imagination of his own and of subsequent ages. The dress of Elijah became so normally the dress of prophets who would fain have assumed his authority without one spark of his inspiration, that the later Zechariah has to warn his people against sham prophets who appeared with hairy garments, and who wounded their own hands for no other purpose than to deceive.[1] The robe of skin, after the long interspace of centuries, was still the natural garb of "the glorious eremite," who in his spirit and power made straight in the deserts a highway for our God.

Such was the man who delivered to Ahab in one sentence his tremendous message: "As Jehovah, God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand"—such was the introductory formula, which became proverbial, and which authenticated the prophecy—"There shall not be dew[2] nor rain these years but according to my word." The phrase "to stand before Jehovah" was used of

[1] Zech. xiii. 4.

[2] The word also means "sea-mist" (Cheyne, p. 15).

priests: it was applicable to a prophet in a far deeper and less external sense.[1] Drought was one of the recognised Divine punishments for idolatrous apostasy. If Israel should fall into disobedience, we read in Deuteronomy, "the Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust; from heaven shall it come down upon thee—until thou be destroyed"; and in Leviticus we read, "If ye will not hearken, I will make your heaven as iron and your earth as brass." The threat was too significant to need any explanation. The conscience of Ahab could interpret only too readily that prophetic menace.

The message of Elijah marked the beginning of a three, or three and a half years' famine. This historic drought is also mentioned by Menander of Tyre, who says that after a year, at the prayer of Ethbaal, the priest and king, there came abundant thunder showers. St. James represents the famine as well as its termination as having been caused by Elijah's prayer.[2] But the expression of the historian is general. Elijah might pray for rain, but no prophet could, *proprio motu*, have offered up a prayer for so awful a curse upon an entire country as a famine, in which thousands of the innocent would suffer no less severely than the guilty. Three years' famine was a recognised penalty for apostasy. It was one of the sore plagues of God. It had befallen Judah "because of Saul and his bloody house,"[3] and had been offered to guilty David as an alternative for

[1] Lev. xxvi. 19; Psalm cxxxiv. 1; Heb. x. 11.

[2] So too Ecclus. xlviii. 2, "He *brought* a sore famine upon them, and by his zeal he diminished their number"; but the writer adds, "*By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens.*" Deut. xxviii. 12; Amos iv. 7.

[3] 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

three days' pestilence, or three years' flight before his enemies.[1] We are not here told that Elijah prayed for it, but that he announced its commencement, and declared that only in accordance with his announcement should it close.

He delivered his message, and what followed we do not know. Ahab's tolerance was great; and, however fierce may have been his displeasure, he seems in most cases to have personally respected the sacredness and dignity of the prophets. The king's wrath might provoke an outburst of sullenness, but he contented himself with menacing and reproachful words. It was otherwise with Jezebel. A genuine idolatress, she hated the servants of Jehovah with implacable hatred, and did her utmost to suppress them by violence. It was probably to save Elijah from her fury that he was bidden to fly into safe hiding, while her foiled rage expended itself in the endeavour to extirpate the whole body of the prophets of the Lord. But, just as the child Christ was saved when Herod massacred the infants of Bethlehem, so Elijah, at whom Jezebel's blow was chiefly aimed, had escaped beyond her reach. A hundred other imperilled prophets were hidden in a cave by the faithfulness of Obadiah, the king's vizier.

The word of the Lord bade Elijah to fly eastward and hide himself "in the brook Cherith,[2] that is before Jordan." The site of this ravine—which Josephus only calls "a certain torrent bed"—has not been identi-

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. "Three," not "seven," is probably here the true reading.

[2] Not "by," as in the A.V. Cherith means "cut off" (1 Kings xvii. 3). "The Lord hid him" (Jer. xxxvi. 26). "In famine he shall redeem thee from death. At famine and destruction thou shalt laugh" (Job v. 20-22).

fied. It was doubtless one of the many wadies which run into the deep Ghôr or cleft of the Jordan on its eastern side. If it belonged to his native Gilead, Elijah would be in little fear of being discovered by the emissaries whom Ahab sent in every direction to seek for him. Whether it was the Wady Kelt,[1] or the Wady el Jabis,[2] or the Ain Fusail,[3] we know the exact characteristics of the scene. On either side, deep, winding and precipitous, rise the steep walls of rock, full of tropic foliage, among which are conspicuous the small dark green leaves and stiff thorns of the nubk. Far below the summit of the ravine, marking its almost imperceptible thread of water by the brighter green of the herbage, and protected by masses of dewy leaves from the fierce power of evaporation, the hidden torrent preserves its life in all but the most long-continued periods of drought. In such a scene Elijah was absolutely safe. Whenever danger approached he could hide himself in some fissure or cavern of the beetling crags where the wild birds have their nest, or sit motionless under the dense screen of interlacing boughs. The wildness and almost terror of his surroundings harmonised with his stern and fearless spirit. A spirit like his would rejoice in the unapproachable solitude, communing with God alike when the sun flamed in the zenith and when the midnight hung over him with all its stars.

The needs of an Oriental—particularly of an ascetic Bedawy prophet—are small as those of the simplest hermit. Water and a few dates often suffice him for days together. Elijah drank of the brook, and God "had commanded the ravens to feed him there." The

[1] Robinson. [2] Benjamin of Tudela. [3] Marinus Sanutus (1321).

shy, wild, unclean birds[1] "brought him"—so the old prophetic narrative tells us—"bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." We may remark in passing, that flesh twice a day or even once a day, if with Josephus we read "bread in the morning and flesh in the evening," is no part of an Arab's ordinary food. It is regarded by him as wholly needless, and indeed as an exceptional indulgence. The double meal of flesh does not resemble the simple diet of bread and water on which the Prophet lived afterwards at Sarepta. Are we or are we not to take this as a literal fact? Here we are face to face with a plain question to which I should deem it infamous to give a false or a prevaricating answer.

Before giving it, let us clear the ground. First of all, it is a question which can only be answered by serious criticism. Assertion can add nothing to it, and is not worth the breath with which it is uttered. The anathemas of obsolete and *a priori* dogmatism against those who cannot take the statement as simple fact do not weigh so much as a dead autumn leaf in the minds of any thoughtful men.

Some holy but uninstructed soul may say, "It stands on the sacred page: why should you not understand it literally?" It might be sufficient to answer, Because there are many utterances on the sacred page which are purely poetic or metaphorical. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the brook shall pick it out, and the young vultures shall eat it."[2] The statement looks prosaic and positive enough, but what human being

[1] The ravens were unclean birds (Deut. xiv. 14), and this naturally startled and offended the Rabbis.

[2] Prov. xxx. 17.

ever took it literally? "Curse not the king—for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." Who does not see at once that the words are poetic and metaphorical? "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." How many educated Christians can assert that they believe that the unredeemed will be eaten for ever by literal worms in endless flames? The man who pretends that he is obliged to understand literally the countless Scriptural metaphors involved in an Eastern language of which nearly every word is a pictorial metaphor, only shows himself incompetent to pronounce an opinion on subjects connected with history, literature, or religious criticism.

Is it then out of dislike to the supernatural, or disbelief in its occurrence, that the best critics decline to take the statement literally?

Not at all. Most Christians have not the smallest difficulty in accepting the supernatural. If they believe in the stupendous miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, what possible difficulty could they have in accepting any other event merely on the ground that it is miraculous? To many Christians all life seems to be one incessant miracle. Disbelieving that any force less than the fiat of God could have thrilled into inorganic matter the germs of vegetable and still more of animal life; believing that their own life is supernatural, and that they are preserved as they were created by endless cycles of ever-recurrent miracles; believing that the whole spiritual life is supernatural in its every characteristic; they have not the slightest unwillingness to believe a miracle when any real evidence can be adduced for it. They accept, without the smallest misgiving, the miracles of Jesus Christ our

Lord, radiating as ordinary works from His Divine nature, performed in the full blaze of history, attested by hundredfold contemporary evidence, leading to results of world-wide and eternal significance—miracles which were, so to speak, natural, normal, and necessary, and of which each revealed some deep moral or spiritual truth. But if miracles can only rest on evidence, the dullest and least instructed mind can see that the evidence for this and for some other miracles in this narrative stands on a wholly different footing. Taken apart from dogmatic assertions which are themselves unproven or disproved, the evidence that ravens daily fed Elijah is wholly inadequate to sustain the burden laid upon it.

In the first place, the story occurs in a book compiled some centuries after the event which it attests; in a book solemn indeed and sacred, but composite, and in some of its details not exempt from the accidents which have always affected all human literature.

And this incident is unattested by any other evidence. It is, so to speak, isolated. It is quite separable from the historic features of the narrative, and is out of accordance with what is truly called the Divine economy of miracles. No miracle was wrought to supply Elijah with water; and if a miracle was needed to supply him with bread and flesh, it is easy to imagine hundreds of forms of such direct interposition which would be more normal and more in accordance with all other Scripture miracles than the continuous overruling of the natural instincts of ravenous birds. It has been said that this particular form of miracle was needed for its evidential value; but there is nothing in the narrative to imply that it had the

smallest evidential value for any one of Elijah's contemporaries, or even that they knew of it at all.

Further, we find it, not in a plain prose narrative, but in a narrative differing entirely from the prosaic setting in which it occurs—a narrative which rises in many parts to the height of poetic and imaginative splendour. There is nothing to show that it was not intended to be a touch of imaginative poetry and nothing more. Part of the greatness of Hebrew literature lies in its power of conveying eternal truth, as, for instance, in the Book of Job and in many passages of the prophets, in the form of imaginative narration. The stories of Elijah and Elisha come from the Schools of the Prophets. If room was left in them for the touch of poetic fiction, or for the embellishment of history with moral truth, conveyed in the form of parable or apologue, we can at once account for the sudden multitude of miracles. They were founded no doubt in many instances on actual events, but in the form into which the narrative is thrown they were recorded to enhance the greatness of the heroic chiefs of the Schools of the Prophets. It is therefore uncertain whether the original narrator believed, or meant his readers literally to believe, such a statement as that Elijah was fed morning and evening by actual ravens. It cannot be proved that he intended more than a touch of poetry, by which he could convey the lesson that the prophet was maintained by marked interventions of that providence of God which is itself in all its workings supernatural. God's feeding of the ravens in their nest was often alluded to in Hebrew poetry; and if the marvellous support of the Prophet in his lonely hiding-place was to be represented in an imaginative form, this way of representing it would naturally occur to the writer's thoughts. Similarly,

when Jerome wrote the purely fictitious life of Paul the Hermit, which was taken for fact even by his contemporaries, he thinks it quite natural to say that Paul and Antony saw a raven sitting on a tree, who flew gently down to them and placed a loaf on the table before them. Ravens haunt the lonely, inaccessible cliffs among which Elijah found his place of refuge. It needed but a touch of metaphor to transform them into ministers of Heaven's beneficence.

But besides all this, the word rendered ravens (*Orebim*, עֹרְבִים) only has that meaning if it be written with the vowel points. But the vowel points are confessedly not "inspired" in any sense, but are a late Massoretic invention. Without the change of a letter the word may equally well mean people of the city Orbo,[1] or of the rock Oreb (as was suggested even in the Bereshith Rabba by Rabbi Judah); or "merchants," as in Ezek. xxvii. 27; or Arabians. No doubt difficulties might be suggested about any of these interpretations; but which would be most reasonable, the acceptance of such small difficulties, or the literal acceptance of a stupendous miracle, unlike any other in the Bible, by which we are to believe on the isolated authority of a nameless and long subsequent writer, that, for months or weeks together, voracious and unclean birds brought bread and flesh to the Prophet twice a day? The old naturalistic attempts to explain the miracle are on the face of them absurd; but it is as perfectly open to any one who chooses to say that "Arabians," or "Orbites," or "merchants," or "people of the rock Oreb" fed Elijah, as to say that the "ravens" did so. The explanation now universally accepted by

[1] Orbo was a small town near the Jordan and Bethshan.

the Higher Criticism is different. It is to accept the meaning "ravens," but not with wooden literalness to interpret didactic and poetic symbolism as though it were bald and matter-of-fact prose. The imagery of a grand religious *Haggada* is not to be understood, nor was it ever meant to be understood, like the page of a dull annalist. Analogous stories are found abundantly alike in early pagan and early Christian literature and in mediæval hagiology. They are true in essence though not in fact, and the intention of them is often analogous to this; but no story is found so noble as this in its pure and quiet simplicity.

Let this then suffice and render it needless to recur to similar discussions. If any think themselves bound to interpret this and all the other facts in these narratives in their most literal sense; if they hold that the mere mention of such things by unknown writers in unknown time—possibly centuries afterwards, when the event may have become magnified by the refraction of tradition—is sufficient to substantiate them, let them hold their own opinion as long as it can satisfy them. But *proof* of such an opinion they neither have nor can have; and let them beware of priding themselves on the vaunt of their "faith," when such "faith" may haply prove to be no more than a distortion of the truer faith which proves all things and only holds fast that which will stand the test. A belief based on some *a priori* opinion about "verbal dictation" is not necessarily meritorious. It may be quite the reverse. Such a dogma has never been laid down by the Church in general. It has very rarely been insisted upon by any branch of the Church in any age. A belief which prides itself on ignorance of the vast horizon opened to us by the study of many forms of literature, by the advance of

criticism, by the science of comparative religion—so far from being religious or spiritual may only be a sign of ignorance, or of a defective love of truth. A dogmatism which heaps upon intelligent faith burdens at once needless and intolerable may spring from sources which should tend to self-humiliation rather than to spiritual pride.[1] *Abundet quisque in sensu suo.* But such beliefs have not the smallest connexion with true faith or sincere Christianity. God is a God of truth, and he who tries to force himself into a view which history and literature, no less than the faithful following of the Divine light within him, convince him to be untenable, does not rise into faith, but sins and does mischief by feebleness and *lack* of faith.[2]

[1] On the other side, Bunsen (*Bibelwerk*, v. 2, 540) speaks too strongly when he says that "nothing but boundless ignorance, or, where historical criticism has not died out, an hierarchical dilettanti reaction, foolhardy hypocrisy, and weak-hearted fanaticism would wish to demand the faith of a Christian community in the historic truths of these miracles as if they had actually taken place." He regards the whole narrative as a "popular epic—the fruit of an inspiration, which he, as it were some superhuman being, awakened in his disciples."

[2] I append the remarks of Professor Milligan, a theologian of unimpeachable orthodoxy. "The miracle," he says, "is so remarkable, so much out of keeping with most of the other miracles of Scripture, that even pious and devout minds may well be perplexed by it, and we can feel no surprise at the attempts made to explain it. Such attempts are not inconsistent with the most devout reverence for the word of God. They are rather, not unfrequently, the result of a just persuasion that the Eastern mind did not express itself in forms similar to those of the West" (*Elijah*, p. 22). He proceeds to protest against the harsh condemnation of those who thus only try to interpret the real ideas present in the mind of the writer. He regards it as perhaps a highly poetic and figurative representation of the truth that the God of Nature was with Elijah. "The value of the Prophet's experience is neither heightened by a literal, nor diminished by a figurative, interpretation of what passed" (p. 24).

CHAPTER XXXV.

ELIJAH AT SAREPTA.

1 KINGS xvii. 7, xviii. 19.

"The rain is God's compassion."—MOHAMMED.

THE fierce drought continued, and "at the end of days" [1] even the thin trickling of the stream in the clefts of Cherith was dried up. In the language of Job it felt the glare and vanished.[2] No miracle was wrought to supply the Prophet with water, but once more the providence of God intervened to save his life for the mighty work which still awaited him. He was sent to the region where, nearly a millennium later, the feet of his Lord followed him on a mission of mercy to those other sheep of His flock who were not of the Judæan fold.

The word of the Lord bade him make his way to the Sidonian city of Zarephath. Zarephath, the Sarepta of St. Luke, the modern Surafend, lay between Tyre and Sidon, and there the waters would not be wholly dried up, for the fountains of Lebanon were not yet exhausted. The drought had extended to Phœnicia,[3]

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 7. Perhaps years (Lev. xxv. 29; 1 Sam. xxvii. 7).

[2] Job vi. 17.

[3] Menander, quoted by Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 2. He says it lasted for a year.

but Elijah was told that there a widow woman would sustain him. The Baal-worshipping queen who had hunted for his life would be least of all likely to search for him in a city of Baal-worshippers in the midst of her own people. He is sent among these Baal-worshippers to do them kindness, to receive kindness from them—perhaps to learn a wider tolerance, and to find that idolaters also are human beings, children, like the orthodox, of the same heavenly Father. He had been taught the lesson of "dependence upon God": he was now to learn the lesson of "fellowship with man." Travelling probably by night both for coolness and for safety, Elijah went that long journey to the heathen district. He arrived there faint with hunger and thirst. Seeing a woman gathering sticks near the city gate he asked her for some water, and as she was going to fetch it he called to her and asked her also to bring him a morsel of bread. The answer revealed the condition of extreme want to which she was reduced. Recognising that Elijah was an Israelite, and therefore a worshipper of Jehovah, she said, "As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but (only) a handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse." She was gathering a couple of sticks to make one last meal for herself and her son, and then to lie down and die.[1] For drought did not only mean universal anguish, but much actual starvation. It meant, as Joel says, speaking of the desolation caused by locusts, that the cattle groan and perish, and the corn withers, and the seeds rot under their clods.

Strong in faith Elijah told her not to fear, but first to supply his own more urgent needs, and then to

[1] LXX., "My sons"—perhaps with reference to "her house" in verse 15.

make a meal for herself and her son. Till Jehovah sent rain, the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail. She believed the promise, and for many days, perhaps for two whole years, the Prophet continued to be her guest.

But after a time her boy fell grievously sick, and at last died, or seemed to die.[1] So dread a calamity —the smiting of the stay of her home, and the son of her widowhood—filled the woman with terror. She longed to get rid of the presence of this terrible "man of God."[2] He must have come, she thought, to bring her sin to remembrance before God, and so to cause Him to slay her son. The Prophet was touched by the pathos of her appeal, and could not bear that she should look upon him as the cause of her bereavement. "Give me thy son," he said. Taking the dead boy from her arms, he carried him to the chamber which she had set apart for him, and laid him on his own bed. Then, after an earnest cry to God, he stretched himself three times over the body of the youth, as though to breathe into his lungs and restore his vital warmth, at the same time praying intensely that "his soul might come into him again."[3] His prayer was heard; the boy revived. Carrying him down from the chamber, Elijah had the happiness of restoring him to

[1] Perhaps the language of the Hebrew is not actually decisive. Josephus says, *τὴν ψυχὴν ἀφεῖναι καὶ δόξαι νεκρόν*. In any case his recovery was due to Elijah's prayer.

[2] The phrase "man of God" is characteristic of the Book of Kings, in which it occurs fifty-three times. It became a normal description of Elijah and Elisha. "What have I to do with thee?" Comp. 2 Sam. xvi. 10; Luke v. 8. It was a common superstition that death always followed the appearance of superhuman beings.

[3] Compare the similar revivals of life wrought by Elisha (2 Kings iv. 34), and by St. Paul (Acts xx. 10).

his widowed mother with the words, "See, thy son liveth." So remarkable an event not only convinced the woman that Elijah was indeed what she had called him, "a man of God," but also that Jehovah was the true God. It was not unnatural that tradition should interest itself in the boy thus strangely snatched from the jaws of death. The Jews fancied that he grew up to be servant of Elijah, and afterwards to be the prophet Jonah. The tradition at least shows an insight into the fact that Elijah was the first missionary sent from among the Jews to the heathen, and that Jonah became the second.

We are not to suppose that during his stay at Zarephath Elijah remained immured in his chamber. Safe and unsuspected, he might, at least by night, make his way to other places, and it is reasonable to believe that he then began to haunt the glades and heights of beautiful and deserted Carmel, which was at no great distance, and where he could mourn over the ruined altar of Jehovah and take refuge in any of its "more than two thousand tortuous caves." But what was the object of his being sent to Zarephath? That it was not for his own sake alone, that it had in it a purpose of conversion, is distinctly implied by our Lord when He says that in those days there were many widows in Israel, yet Elijah was not sent to them, but to this Sidonian idolatress. The prophets and saints of God do not always understand the meaning of Providence or the lessons of their Divine training. Francis of Assisi at first entirely misunderstood the real drift and meaning of the Divine intimations that he was to rebuild the ruined Church of God, which he afterwards so gloriously fulfilled. The thoughts of God are not as man's thoughts, nor His ways as man's

ways, nor does He make all His servants as it were "fusile apostles," as He made St. Paul. The education of Elijah was far from complete even long afterwards. To the very last, if we are to accept the records of him as historically literal, amid the revelations vouchsafed to him he had not grasped the truth that the Elijah-spirit, however needful it may seem to be, differs very widely from the Spirit of the Lord of Life. Yet may it not have been that Elijah was sent to learn from the kind ministrations of a Sidonian widow, to whose care his life was due, some inkling of those truths which Christ revealed so many centuries afterwards, when He visited the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and extended His mercy to the great faith of the Syro-Phœnician woman? May not Elijah have been meant to learn what had to be taught by experience to the two great Apostles of the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision, that not every Baal-worshipper was necessarily corrupt or wholly insincere? St. Peter was thus taught that God is no respecter of persons, and that whether their religious belief be false or true, in every nation he that feareth Him and doeth righteousness is accepted of Him. St. Paul learnt at Damascus and taught at Athens that God made of one every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth, that they should seek God if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ELIJAH AND AHAB.

1 KINGS, xviii. 1—19.

"Return, oh backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for Thou art Jehovah our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the tumult (of votaries) upon the mountains. Truly in Jehovah our God is the salvation of Israel. And the Shame (*i.e.*, Baal) hath devoured the labour of our fathers." —JER. iii. 22-24.

ELIJAH stayed long with the Sidonian widow, safe in that obscure concealment, and with his simple wants supplied. But at last the word of the Lord came to him with the conviction that the drought had accomplished its appointed end in impressing the souls of king and people, and that the time was come for some immense and decisive demonstration against the prevalent apostasy. All his sudden movements, all his stern incisive utterances were swayed by his allegiance to Jehovah before whom he stood, and he now received the command, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth."

To obey such a mandate showed the strength of his faith. It is clear that even before the menace of the drought he had been known, and unfavourably known, to Ahab. The king saw in him a prophet who fearlessly opposed all the idolatrous tendencies into which

he had led his easy and faithless people. How terribly must Ahab's hatred have been now intensified! We see from all the books of the prophets that they were personally identified with their predictions; that they were held responsible for them, were even regarded in popular apprehension as having actually brought about the things which they predicted. "See," says Jehovah to the timid boy Jeremiah, "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." The Prophet is addressed as though he personally effected the ruin he denounced. Elijah, then, would be regarded by Ahab as in one sense the author of the three years' famine. It would be held—not indeed with perfect accuracy, yet with a not unnatural confusion—that it was *he* who had shut up the windows of heaven and caused the misery and starvation of the suffering multitudes. With what wrath would a great and powerful king like Ahab look on this bold intruder, this skin-clad alien of Gilead, who had frustrated his policy, defied his power, and stamped his reign with so overwhelming a disaster. Yet he is bidden, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab"; and perhaps his immediate safety was only secured by the additional message, "and I will send rain upon the earth."

Things had, indeed, come to their worst. The "sore famine" in Samaria had reached a point which, if it had not been alleviated, would have led to the utter ruin of the miserable kingdom.

In this crisis Ahab did all that a king could do. Most of the cattle had perished, but it was essential to save if possible some of the horses and mules. No grass was left on the scorched plains and bare brown

hills except where there were fountains and brooks which had not entirely vanished under that copper sky. To these places it was necessary to drive such a remnant of the cattle as it might be still possible to preserve alive. But who could be trusted to rise entirely superior to individual selfishness in such a search? Ahab thought it best to trust no one but himself and his vizier Obadiah. The very name of this high official, Obadjahu, like the common Mohammedan names Abdallah, Abderrahnan, and others, implied that he was "a servant of Jehovah." His conduct answered to his name, for on Jezebel's persecuting attempt to exterminate Jehovah's prophets in their schools or communities, he, "the Sebastian of the Jewish Diocletian," had, at the peril of his own life, taken a hundred of them, concealed them in two of the great limestone caves of Palestine—perhaps in the recesses of Mount Carmel,[1] and fed them with bread and water. It is to Ahab's credit that he retained such a man in office, though the touch of timidity which we trace in Obadiah may have concealed the full faithfulness of his personal allegiance to the old worship. Yet that such a man should still hold the post of chamberlain (*al-hab-baith*) furnishes a fresh proof that Ahab was not himself a worshipper of Baal.

The king and his vizier went in opposite directions, each of them unaccompanied, and Obadiah was on his way when he was startled by the sudden appearance of Elijah. He had not previously seen him, but recognising him by his shaggy locks, his robe of skin, and

[1] Amos ix. 3: "And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence." The phrase shows the security and seclusion of these caves and thickets, the haunt once of lions and bears, and still of leopards and hyænas.

the awful sternness of his swarthy countenance, he was almost abjectly terrified. Apart from the awe-inspiring aspect and manner of the Prophet, this seemed no mere man who stood before him, but the representative of the Eternal, and the wielder of His power. To his contemporaries he appeared like the incarnate vengeance of Jehovah against guilty times, a flash as it were of God's consuming fire. To the Moslim of to-day he is still *El Khudr*, "the eternal wanderer." Springing from his chariot, Obadiah fell flat on his face and cried, "Is it thou, my lord Elijah?" "It is I," answered the Prophet, not wasting words over his terror and astonishment. "Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here."

The message enhanced the vizier's alarm. Why had not Elijah showed himself at once to Ahab? Did some terrible vindictive purpose lurk behind his message? Did Elijah confuse the aims and deeds of the minister with those of the king? Why did he despatch him on an errand which might move Ahab to kill him? Was not Elijah aware, he asks, with Eastern hyperbole, that Ahab had sent "to every nation and kingdom" to ask if Elijah was there, and when told that he was not there he made them confirm the statement by an oath?[1] What would come of such a message if Obadiah conveyed it? No sooner would it be delivered than the wind of the Lord would sweep Elijah away into some new and unknown solitude,[2] and Ahab, thinking that

[1] The LXX. adds that he inflicted vengeance because Elijah was not found: "Καὶ ἐνέπρησε τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ τὰς χωρὰς αὐτῆς ὅτι οὐχ εὕρηκέ σε" (1 Kings xviii. 10).

[2] Obadiah seems to have believed in miraculous transference of the Prophet from place to place. Comp. Ezek. iii. 12-14 (where "the spirit" may be rendered "a spirit," or "a wind"), viii. 3; 2 Kings ii. 16; Acts viii. 39; and the Ebionite Gospel of St. Matthew. "My mother, the Holy Ghost, took me by a hair of the head, and carried

he had only been befooled, would in his angry disappointment, put Obadiah to death. Had he deserved such a fate? Had not Elijah heard of his reverence for Jehovah from his youth, and of his saving the hundred prophets at the peril of his life? Why then send him on so dangerous a mission? To these agitated appeals Elijah answered by his customary oath, "As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand,[1] I will show myself unto him to-day." Then Obadiah went and told Ahab, and Ahab with impetuous haste hastened to meet Elijah, knowing that on him depended the fate of his kingdom.

Yet when they met he could not check the burst of anger which sprang to his lips.

"Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" he fiercely exclaimed. Elijah was not the man to quail before the *vultus instantis tyranni.* "I have not troubled Israel," was the undaunted answer, "but thou and thy father's house." The cause of the drought was not the menace of Elijah, but the apostasy to Baalim. It was time that the fatal controversy should be decided. There must be an appeal to the people. Elijah was in a position to dictate, and he did dictate. "Let all Israel," he said, "be summoned to Mount Carmel;" and there he would singly meet in their presence the four hundred and fifty

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me to Mount Tabor" (Orig. *in Joann.*, ii., § 6; and Jer. *in Mic.* vii. 6). So in Bel and the Dragon 33-36 (Abarbanel, *Comm. in Habakkuk*) the prophet Habakkuk is said to have been taken invisibly to supply food to Daniel in the den of lions. "Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown and bare him by the hair of his head, and through the vehemency of his spirit" (*Midr. Robshik Rabba*, "*in the might of the Holy Ghost*") "set him in Babylon."

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 15, LXX., "The Lord God of Israel" has now become to him more prominently "the Lord God of Hosts."

[2] The phrase had already been applied to Achan (Josh. vii. 25).

prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the Asherah, all of whom ate at Jezebel's table.[1] Then and there a great challenge should take place, and the question should be settled for ever, whether Baal or Jehovah was to be the national god of Israel. What challenge could be fairer, seeing that Baal was the Sun-god, the god of fire ?

[1] *I.e.*, were maintained at Jezebel's expense. The subsequent narration is silent as to the presence of the prophets of the Asherah, and Wellhausen thinks that the words here are an interpolation.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL.

1 KINGS xviii. 20—40.

"O for a sculptor's hand,
That thou might'st take thy stand,
Thy wild hair floating in the eastern breeze!"

KEBLE.

IT never occurred to Ahab to refuse the challenge, or to arrest the hated messenger. The hermit and the dervish are sacrosanct; they stand before kings and are not ashamed. Having nothing to desire, they have nothing to fear. So Antony stalked into the streets of Alexandria to denounce its prefect; so Athanasius fearlessly seized the bridle of Constantine in his new city; so a ragged and dwarfish old man—Macedonius the Barley-eater—descended from his mountain cave at Antioch to stop the horses of the avenging commissioners of Thedosius, and bade them go back and rebuke the fury of their Emperor,—and so far from punishing him they alighted, and fell on their knees, and begged his blessing.

The vast assembly was gathered by royal proclamation. There could have been no scene in the land of Israel more strikingly suitable for the purpose than Mount Carmel. It is a ridge of upper oolite, or Jura limestone, which at the eastern extremity rises more

than sixteen hundred feet above the sea, sinking down to six hundred feet at the western extremity. The "excellency of Carmel" of which the prophet speaks[1] consists in the fruitfulness which to this day makes it rich in flowers of all hues, and clothes it with the impenetrable foliage of oak, pine, walnut, olive, laurel, dense brushwood, and evergreen shrubberies thicker than in any other part in Central Palestine. The name means "Garden of God," and travellers, delighted with the rocky dells and blossoming glades, describe Carmel as "still the fragrant lovely mountain that it was of old."[2] It "forms the southern extremity of the Gulf of Khaifa, and separates the great western plain of Philistia from the plain of Esdraelon, and the plain of Phœnicia." "It is difficult," says Sir G. Grove, "to find another site in which every particular is so minutely fulfilled as in this." The whole mountain is now called *Mar Elias* from the Prophet's name.

The actual spot of the range near which took place this most memorable event in the history of Israel was almost undoubtedly a little below the eastern summit of the ridge. It is "a terrace of natural rock," which commands a fine view of the plains and lakes and the hills of Galilee, and the windings of the Kishon, with Jezreel glimmering in the far distance under the heights of Gilboa. The remains of an old and massive square structure are here visible, called *El-Muhrakkah*, "the burning," or "the sacrifice," perhaps the site of Elijah's

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2; Micah vii. 14. Its beauty and fruitfulness are alluded to in Jer. xlvi. 18, l. 19; Amos i. 2, ix. 3; Nahum i. 4; Cant. vii. 5.

[2] Sir George Grove, to whose excellent article in Smith's *Dict of Bible* (i. 279) I am indebted, quotes Martineau (i. 317), Porter's *Handbook*, Van de Velde, etc. See, too, Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 353-56.

altar. Under the ancient olives still remains the round well of perennial water from which, even in the drought, the Prophet could fill the barrels which he poured over his sacrifice. Elijah's grotto is pointed out in the Church of the Convent, and another near the sea. In the region known as "the garden of Elijah" are found the *geodes* and *septaria*—stones and fossils which assume the aspect, sometimes of loaves of bread, sometimes of water-melons and olives, and are still known as "Elijah's fruits." The whole mountain murmurs with his name.[1] He became in local legend the oracular god Carmelus, whose "altar and devotion" drew visitors no less illustrious than Pythagoras and Vespasian to visit the sacred hill.[2]

Here, then, at early dawn the Prophet of Jehovah, in his solitary grandeur, met the four hundred and fifty idolatrous priests and their rabble of attendant fanatics in the presence of the half-curious king and the half-apostate people. He presented the oft-repeated type of God's servant alone against the world.[3] Most rarely is it otherwise. They who speak smooth things and prophesy deceits may always live at ease in amicable compromise with the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the Prophet has ever to set his face as a flint against tyrants, and mobs and false prophets, and intriguing priests, and all who daub tottering walls with untempered mortar, and all who, in days smooth and perilous, softly murmur, "Peace, peace, when there

[1] On these *Lapides judaici*, see my *Life of Christ*, i. 129. Illustrations are given in the illustrated edition.

[2] Jambl., *Vit. Pythag.*, iii.; Suet., *Vesp.*, 5; Tac., *Hist.*, ii. 78; Reland, *Palest.*, pp. 327-30.

[3] Megiddo lies in the plain below, and this scene of conflict between good and the powers of evil was an anticipated Armageddon.

is no peace." So it was with Noah in the days of the deluge; so with Amos and Hosea and the later Zechariah; so with Micaiah, the son of Imlah; so with Isaiah, mocked as a babbler by the priests at Jerusalem, and at last sawn assunder; so with Jeremiah, struck in the face by the priest Pashur, and thrust into the miry dungeon, and at last murdered in exile; so with Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, whom they slew between the porch and the altar. Nor has it been less so since the earliest dawn of the New Dispensation. Of John the Baptist the priests and Pharisees said, "He has a devil," and Herod slew him in prison. All, perhaps, of the twelve Apostles were martyred. Paul, like the rest, was intrigued against, thwarted, hated, mobbed, imprisoned, hunted from place to place by the world the Jews, and the false Christians. Treated as the offscouring of all things, he was at last contemptuously beheaded in utter obscurity. Similar fates befell many of the best and greatest of the Fathers. Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, were slain by wild beasts and by fire. Origen's life was one long martyrdom, mostly at the hands of his fellow-Christians. Did not Athanasius stand against the world? What needs it to summon from the prison or the stake the mighty shades of Savonarola, of Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of the Albigenses and Waldenses, of the myriad victims of the Inquisition, of those who were burnt at Smithfield and Oxford, of Luther, of Whitfield? Did Christ mean nothing when He said, among His first beatitudes, "Blessed are ye when all men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake and the gospel's"? Was it mere accident and metaphor when He said, "Ye are of the world, and therefore the world cannot hate you; but Me

it hateth"; and, "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more them of His household"? Which of His best and purest sons, from the first Good Friday down to this day, has ever passed through life unpersecuted of slanderous tongues? Has the nominal Church ever shown any more mercy to saints than the sneering and furious world? What has sustained Christ's hated ones? What but that confidence towards God which lives among those whose heart condemns them not? What but the fact that "they could turn from the storm without to the approving sunshine within"? "See," it has been said, "he who builds on the general esteem of the world builds, not on the sand, but, which is worse, upon the wind, and writes the title-deeds of his hope upon the face of a river." But when a man knows that "one with God is always in a majority," then his loneliness is changed into the confidence that all the ten thousand times ten thousand of Heaven are with him. "His banishment becomes his preferment, his rags his trophies, his nakedness his ornament; and, so long as his innocence is his repast, he feasts and banquets upon bread and water."

And so,

> "Among the faithless, faithful only he;
> Among innumerable false, unmoved,
> Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,"

Elijah fearlessly stood alone, while all the world confronted him with frowning menace. The coward sympathies of the neutrals who face both ways may have been with him, but the multitude of such Laodiceans wink at wrong, and from love of their own ease do not, and dare not, speak. God only was the protector of Elijah, and in himself alone was all his state, as in his garment of hair he approached the people and con-

fronted the idolatrous priests in all the gorgeousness of Baal's vestry. He, like his great predecessor Moses, was the champion of moral purity, of the national faith, of religious freedom and simplicity, of the immediate access of man to God; they were the champions of fanatical and unhallowed religionism, of usurping priest-craft, of unnatural self-abasements, of persecuting despotism, of licentious and cruel rites. Elijah was the deliverer of his people from a hideous and polluted apostasy which, had he not prevailed that day, would have obliterated their name and their memory from the annals of the nations. That he was a genuine historic character—a prophet of Divine commission and marvellous power—cannot for a moment be doubted, however impossible it may now be in every incident to disentangle the literal historic facts from the poetic and legendary emblazonment which those facts not unnaturally received in the ordinary recollection of the prophetic schools. Throughout the great scene which followed, his spirit was that of the Psalmist: "Though an host of men should encamp against me, yet will not my heart be afraid"; that of the "servant of the Lord" in Isaiah: "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, and in His quiver hath He hid me."[1]

His first challenge was to the people. "How long," he asked, "do ye totter between two opinions?[2] If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him."

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[1] Isa. xlix. 2; Cheyne, p. 16.

[2] LXX., 1 Kings xviii. 21, *ἕως πότε ὑμεῖς χωλανεῖτε ἐπ' ἀμφοτέραις ταῖς ἰγνύαις.* Vulg., *usquequo claudicatis in duas partes?* Cheyne renders it: "How long will ye go lame upon tottering knees?" In Psalm cxix. 113, סֵעֲפִים, are "the double-minded." In Ezek. xxxi. 6, סְעִפוֹת, "diverging branches." In Isa. ii. 21, סְעִפֵי, "clefts of rocks" (Bähr).

Awestruck and ashamed the multitude kept unbroken silence. Doubtless it was, in part, the silence of guilt. They knew that they had followed Jezebel into the cruelties of Baal-worship, and the forbidden lusts which polluted the temples of the Asherah. Puritanism simplicity, spirituality of worship involves a strain too great and too lofty for the multitude. Like all Orientals, like the negroes of America, like most weak minds, they loved to rely on a pompous ritual and a sensuous worship. It is so easy to let these stand for the deeper requirements which lie in the truth that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Receiving no answer to his stern question, Elijah laid down the conditions of the contest. "The prophets of Baal," he said, "are four hundred and fifty: I stand alone as a prophet of Jehovah. Let two bullocks be provided for us; they shall slay and dress one, and lay it on wood, but—for there shall be no priestly trickeries to-day—they shall put no fire under. I, though I be no priest, will slay and dress the other, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. Then let all of you, Baal-priests and people if you will, cry to your idols; I will call on the name of Jehovah. The god that answereth by fire let *him* be God."

No challenge could be fairer, for Baal was the Sun-god; and what god could be more likely to answer by fire from that blazing sky? The deep murmur of the people expressed their assent. The Baal priests were caught as in a snare. Their hearts must have sunk within them; his did not. Perhaps some of them believed sufficiently in their idol to hope that, were he demon or deity, he might save himself and his votaries from humiliation and defeat; but most of them

must have been seized with terrible misgiving, as they saw the assembled people prepared to wait with Oriental patience, seated on their abbas on the sides of that natural amphitheatre, till the descending flame should prove that Baal had heard the weird invocation of his worshippers. But, since they could not escape the proposed ordeal, they chose, and slew, and dressed their victim. From morning till noon—many of them with wildly waving arms, others with their foreheads in the dust—they upraised the wild chant of their monotonous invocation, "Baal, hear us! Baal, hear us!" In vain the cry rose and fell, now uttered in soft appealing murmurs, now rising into passionate entreaties. All was silent. There lay the dead bullock putrescing under the burning orb which was at once their deity and the visible sign of his presence. No consuming lightning fell, even when the sun flamed in the zenith of that cloudless sky. There was no voice nor any that answered.

Then they tried still more potent incantations. They began to circle round the altar they had made in one of their solemn dances to the shrill strains of pipe and flute. The rhythmic movements ended in giddy whirls and orgiastic leapings which were a common feature of sensuous heathen worship; dances in which, like modern dervishes, they bounded and yelled and spun round and round till they fell foaming and senseless to the ground.[1] The people looked on expectant, but it was all in vain.

[1] Herodian (*Hist.*, v. 3) describes the dance of Heliogabalus round the altar of the Emesene Sun-god, and Apuleius describes at length the fanatic leapings and gashings of the execrable *Galli*—the eunuch-mendicant priests of the Syrian goddess. From these sources and from allusions in Seneca, Lucian, Statius, Arnobius, etc., Movers

Hitherto the Prophet had remained silent, but now when noon came, and still no fire descended, he mocked them. Now, surely, if ever, was their time! They had been crying for six long hours in their vain repetitions and incantations. Surely they had not shouted loud enough! Baal was a god; some strange accident must have prevented him from hearing the prayer of his miserable priests. Perhaps he was in deep meditation, so that he did not notice those frantic appeals; perhaps he was too busy talking to some one else,[1] or was on a journey somewhere; or was asleep and must be awaked; or, he added with yet more mordant sarcasm, and in a gibe which would have sounded coarse to modern ears, perhaps he has gone aside for a private purpose. He must be called, he must be aroused; he must be made to hear.[2]

Such taunts, addressed to this multitude of priests in the hearing of the people, whom they desired to dupe or to convince, drove them to fiercer frenzy. Already

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(*Phöniz.*, i. 682) derives his description (quoted by Keil, *ad loc.*, E.T., p. 281): "A discordant howling opens the scene. Now they fly wildly through one another, with the head sunk down to the ground, but turning round in circles, so that the loose flowing hair drags through the mire. Thereupon they first bite themselves on the arm, and at last cut themselves with two-edged swords, which they are wont to carry. Then begins a new scene. One of them who surpasses all the rest in frenzy, begins to prophesy with sighs and groans, openly accuses himself of past sins, which he now wishes to punish by the mortifying of the flesh, takes the knotted whip which the Galli are wont to bear, lashes his back, cuts himself with swords, till the blood trickles down from his mangled body."

[1] Verse 27. Others render it "meditating" (De Wette Thenius) or "peevish" (Bähr). Comp. Hom., *Il.*, i. 423; *Od.*, i. 22, etc.

[2] This instance of "grim sarcastic humour" is almost unique in Scripture. It was made more mordant by the paronomasia כִּי־שִׂיחַ וְכִי־שִׂיג לוֹ (2 Sam. i. 22).

the westering sun began to warn them that their hour was past, and failure imminent. They would not succumb without trying the darker sorceries of blood and self-mutilation, which were only resorted to at the most dread extremities. With renewed and redoubled yells they offered on their altar the blood of human sacrifice, stabbing and gashing themselves with swords and lances, till they presented a horrid spectacle. Their vestments and their naked bodies were besmeared with gore[1] as they whirled round and round with shriller and more frenzied screams.[2] They raved in vain. The shadows began to lengthen. The hour for the evening *Minchah*, the evening meal-offering, and oblation of flour and meal, salt and frankincense, drew near.[3] It was already "between the two evenings." They had continued their weird invocations all through the burning day, but there was not any that regarded. There lay the dead bullock on the still fireless altar; and now their Tyrian Sun-god, like the fabled "Hercules," was but burning himself to death on the flaming pyre of sunset amid the unavailing agony of his worshippers.

Then Elijah bade the sullen and baffled fanatics to stand aside, and summoned the people to throng round

[1] Plutarch (*De Superstit.*, p. 170) says: "The priests of Bellona offered their own blood, which was deemed powerful to move their gods." Comp. Herod., ii. 61; Lucian, *De Dea Syra*, 50; Apul., *Metam.*, viii. 28.

[2] עַד לַעֲלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה, "till towards (Numb. xxviii. 4) the offering of the Minchah." LXX., *θυσία*; Vulg., *sacrificium* and *holocaustum*. In verse 39 it is omitted in the LXX. "There is a great concurrence of evidence that the evening sacrifice of the first Temple was not a holocaust, but a cereal oblation" (Robertson Smith, p. 143, quoting 1 Kings xviii. 34; 2 Kings xvi. 15; Ezek. ix. 4, Heb).

[3] Heb., וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ; LXX., *διέτρεχον*; Vulg., *transiliebant*. Literally, they acted like frantic prophets (1 Sam. xviii. 10; Jer. xxix. 26).

him. There was nothing tumultuous or orgiastic in his proceedings. In striking contrast with the four hundred and fifty frantic sun-worshippers, he proceeded in the calmest and most deliberate way. First, in the name of Jehovah, he repaired the old *bamah*—the mountain-altar, which probably Jezebel had broken down. This he did with twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel. Then he dug a broad trench.[1] Then, when he had prepared his bullock, in order to show the people the impossibility of any deception, such as are common among priests, he bade them drench it three times over with four barrels of water,[2] from the still-existent spring, and, not content with that, he filled the trench also with water.[3] Lastly at the time of the evening oblation he briefly offered up one prayer that Jehovah would make it known this day to His backsliding people that He, not Baal, was the Elohim of Israel. He used no "much speaking"; he did not

[1] LXX., θαλάσσαν, or "sea"—the name given to Solomon's molten laver; but the description, "as great as would contain two *seahs* of seed," is curious, for a seah was only the third of an ephah.

[2] Blunt (*Undesigned Coincidences*, II. xxxii.) thinks that as the drought had been so intense the water must have been sea-water. But Josephus says it was drawn ἀπὸ τῆς κρήνης (*Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 5); and the well still exists.

[3] Priests, both pagan and mediæval, have been adepts at deception. At the Reformation the mechanism of winking Madonnas, etc., was exposed to the people. At Pompeii may still be seen the secret staircase behind the altar, and the pipes let into the head of Isis from behind, through which the priests spoke her pretended oracles. St. Chrysostom (*Orat. in. Petr. et Eliam*, which is of uncertain genuineness) tells us that he had himself seen (θεάτης αὐτὸς γενομένος) altars with concealed hollows in the middle, into which the unsuspected operator crept, and blew up a fire which the people were assured was self-kindled (see Keil, p. 282). One legend says that on this occasion a man was suffocated, who had been concealed by the Baal priests inside their altar.

adopt the dervish yells and dances and gashings which were abhorrent to God, though they appealed so powerfully to the sensuous imaginations of the multitude. He only raised his eyes to heaven,[1] and cried aloud in the hush of expectant stillness:—

"Jehovah, God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel,
Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel,
And that I am Thy servant,
And that I have done all these things at Thy word.
Hear me, Jehovah, hear me.
That this people may know that Thou, Jehovah, art God,
And that Thou hast turned their heart back again."

The prayer, with its triple invocation of Jehovah's name, and its seven rhythmic lines, was no sooner ended than down streamed the lightning, and consumed the bullock and the wood, and shattered the stones, and burnt up the dust, and licked up the water in the trenches;[2] and, with one terror-stricken impulse, the people all prostrated themselves on their faces with the cry, "*Yahweh—hoo—ha—Elohim, Yahweh—hoo—ha—Elohim!*" "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God"!—a cry which was almost identical with the name of the victorious prophet Elijahu—"Yah, He is my God."[3]

The magnificent narrative in which the interest has

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 36.

[2] Comp. Lev. ix. 24. Analogous stories existed among pagans (Hom., *Il.*, ii. 305; *Od.*, ii. 143; Verg., *Ecl.*, viii. 105). Pliny says that annals recorded the eliciting of lightning by prayers and incantations (*H. N.*, ii. 54; Winer, *Realwörterb.* 371).

[3] It is after Elijah's time, and probably from his influence, that from this time proper names compounded with Jehovah become almost the rule—as in Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Pekahiah, etc.

been wound up to so high a pitch, and expressed in so lofty a strain of imaginative and dramatic force, ends in a deed of blood. According to Josephus, the people, by a spontaneous movement, "seized and slew the prophets of Baal, Elijah exhorting them to do so." According to the earlier narrative, Elijah said to the people: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there with the sword."[1] It is not necessarily meant that he slew them with his own hand, though indeed he may have done so, as Phinehas sacrificed Jephthah's daughter, and Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. His moral responsibility was precisely the same in either case. We are not told that he had any commission from Jehovah to do this, or was bidden thereto by any voice of the Lord. Yet in those wild days—days of ungovernable passions and imperfect laws, days of ignorance which God winked at—it is not only perfectly probable that Elijah would have acted thus, but most unlikely that his conscience reproached him for doing so, or that it otherwise than approved the sanguinary vengeance. It was the frightful *lex talionis*, which was spoken "to them of old time," and which inflicted on the defeated what they would certainly have inflicted on Elijah had he not been the conqueror. The prophets of Baal indirectly, if not directly, had been the cause of Jezebel's persecution of the prophets of the Lord. The thought of pity would not occur to Elijah any more than it did to the writer, or writers, of Deuteronomy, perhaps, long afterwards, who commanded the stoning of idolaters, whether men or women

[1] 1 Kings xix. 1, בְּחָרֶב; LXX., ἐν ῥομφάιᾳ.

(Deut. xiii. 6-9, xvii. 2-4). The massacre of the priests accorded with the whole spirit of those half-anarchic times. It accords with that Elijah-spirit of orthodox fanaticism, which, as Christ Himself had to teach to the sons of thunder, is not His spirit, but utterly alien from it. If, perhaps two centuries later, the savage deed could be recorded, and recorded with approval, by this narrator from the School of the Prophets in these superb eulogies of his hero; if so many centuries later the disciple whom Jesus loved, and the first martyr-apostle could deem it an exemplary deed; if, centuries later, it could be appealed to as a precedent by Inquisitors with hearts made hard as the nether millstone by bigoted and hateful superstition; if even Puritans could be animated by the same false hallowing of ferocity; how can we judge Elijah if, in dark, unilluminated early days, he had not learnt to rise to a purer standpoint? To this day the names about Carmel shudder, as it were, with reminiscence of this religious massacre. There is *El-Muhrakkah*, "the place of burning"; there is *Tel-el-Kusis*, "the hill of the priests"; and that ancient river, the river Kishon, which had once been choked with the corpses of the host of Sisera, and has since then been incarnadined by the slain of many a battle, is—perhaps in memory of this bloodshed most of all—still known as the *Nahr-el-Mokatta*, or "the stream of slaughter." What wonder that the Eastern Christians in their pictures of Elijah still surround him with the decapitated heads of these his enemies? To this day the Moslim regard him as one who terrifies and slays.[1]

But though the deed of vengeance stands recorded,

[1] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 100.

and recorded with no censure, in the sacred history, we must—without condemning Elijah, and without measuring his days by the meting-rod of Christian mercy—still unhesitatingly hold fast the sound principle of early and as yet uncontaminated Christianity, and say, as said the early Fathers, *Βία ἐχθρὸν Θεῷ.* Violence is a thing hateful to the God of love.

Even Christians, and that down to our own day, have abused the example of Elijah, and asked, "Did not Elijah slaughter the priests of Baal?" as a proof that it is always the duty of States to suppress false religion by violence. Stahl asked that question when he preached before the Prussian court at the Evangelical Conference at Berlin in 1855, adding the dreadful misrepresentation that "Christianity is the religion of intolerance, and its kernel is exclusiveness." Did these hard spirits never consider Christ's own warning? Did they wholly forget the prophecy that "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall His voice be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory, and in His name shall the Gentiles hope"?[1] Calvin reproved Réné, Duchess of Ferrara, for not approving of the spirit of the imprecatory psalms. He said that this was "to set ourselves up as superior to Christ in sweetness and humility"; and that "David even in his hatreds is an example and type of Christ." When Cartwright argued for the execution of the heretics he said: "If this be thought savage and intolerant, I am content to be so with the Holy Ghost." Far wiser is the humble minister in *Old Mortality*, when he withstood Balfour of Burleigh,

[1] Matt. xii. 19, 20; Isa. xlii. 2, 3; Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

in the decision to put to the sword all the inhabitants of Tillietudlem Castle. "By what law," asks Henry Morton, "would you justify the atrocity you would commit?" "If thou art ignorant of it," said Balfour, "thy companion is well aware of the law which gave the men of Jericho to the sword of Joshua, the son of Nun." "Yes," answered the divine, "but we live under a better dispensation, which instructeth us to return good for evil, and to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RAIN.

1 KINGS xviii. 41—46.

"Are there any of the vanities of the nations that can cause rain?" —JER. xiv. 22.

BUT the terrible excitement of the day was not yet over, nor was the victory completely won. The fire had flashed from heaven, but the long-desired rain on which depended the salvation of land and people still showed no signs of falling. And Elijah was pledged to this result. Not until the drought ended could he reach the culmination of his victory over the Sun-god of Jezebel's worship.

But his faith did not fail him. "Get thee up," he said to Ahab, "eat and drink, for there is a sound of the feet of the rain-storm."[1] Doubtless through all that day of feverish anxiety, neither king, nor people, nor prophet had eaten. As for the Prophet, but little sufficed him at any time, and the slaughter of the defeated priests would not prevent either king or people from breaking their long fast. Doubtless the king's tent was pitched on one of the slopes over the plain.

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[1] LXX., *ὅτι φωνὴ τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ὑετοῦ.* Perhaps, with reference to this reading, Josephus afterwards describes "the little cloud" as "no bigger than a human footstep" (*οὐ πλέον ἴχνους ἀνθρωπίνου*).

But Elijah did not join him. He heard, indeed, with prophetic ear the rush of the coming rain, but he had still to wrestle in prayer with Jehovah for the fulfilment of His promise. So he ascended towards the summit of the promontory where the purple peak of Carmel—still called Jebel Mar Elias ("the hill of Lord Elijah")—overlooks the sea, and there he crouched low on the ground in intense prayer, putting his face between his knees. After his first intensity of supplication had spent itself, he said to his boy attendant,[1] traditionally believed to have been the son of the widow of Zarephath whom he had plucked from death :—

"Go up now, look towards the sea."

The youth went up, and gazed out long and intently, for he well knew that if rain came it would sweep inland from the waters of the Mediterranean, and to an experienced eye the signals of coming storm are patent long before they are noticed by others. But all was as it had been for so many weary and dreadful months. The sea a sheet of unruffled gold glared under the setting sun, which still sank through an unclouded sky. Can we not imagine the accent of misgiving and disappointment with which he brought back the one word :—

"Nothing."

Once more the Prophet bowed his face between his knees in prayer, and sent the youth; and again, and yet again, seven times. And each time had come to him the chilling answer, "Nothing." But the seventh time he called out from the mountain summit his joyous cry: "Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand."

[1] LXX., τῷ παιδαρίῳ αὐτοῦ.

And now, indeed, Elijah knew that his triumph was completed. He bade his servant fly with winged speed to Ahab, and tell him to make ready his chariot at once, lest the burst of the coming rain should flood the river and the road, and prevent him from getting over the rough ground which lay between him and his palace at Jezreel.

Then the blessed storm burst on the parched soil with a sense of infinite refreshfulness which only an Eastern in a thirsty land can fully comprehend. And Ahab mounted his chariot. He had not driven far before the heaven, which had for so long been like brass over an iron globe, was one black mass of clouds driven by the wind, and the drenching rain poured down in sheets. And through the storm the chariot swept, and Elijah girded up his loins, and, filled with a Divine impulse of exultation, ran before it, keeping pace with the king's steeds for all those fifteen miles, even after the overwhelming strain of all he had gone through, apparently without food, that day. And as through the rifts of rain the king saw his wild dark figure outrunning his swift steeds, and seeming "to dilate and conspire" with the rushing storm, can we wonder that the tears of remorse and gratitude streamed down his face?[1]

The chariot reached Jezreel, and at the city gate Elijah stopped. Like his antitype, the great forerunner, Elijah was a voice in the wilderness; like his Lord that was to be, he loved not cities. The instinct of the Bedawin kept him far from the abodes of men, and his home was never among them. He needed no roof to shelter him, nor change of raiment. The hollows of Mount Gilboa were his sufficient resting-place, and he

[1] LXX., 1 Kings xviii. 45, Καὶ ἔκλαιε καὶ ἐπορεύετο Ἀχαὰβ ἕως Ιεζράελ.

could find a sleeping-place in the caves near its abundant Eastern spring. Nor was he secure of safety. He knew, in spite of his superhuman victory, that a dark hour awaited Ahab when he would have to tell Jezebel that the people had repudiated her idol, and that Elijah had slain her four hundred and fifty priests. He knew "that axe-like edge unturnable" which always smote and feared not. Ahab was but as plastic clay in the strong hands of his queen, and for her there existed neither mystery nor miracle except in the worship of the insulted Baal. Was not Baal, she said, the real sender of the rain, on whose priests this fanatic from rude Gilead had wrought his dreadful sacrifice? Oh that she could have been for one hour on Carmel in the place of her vacillating and easily daunted husband! For was she not convinced, and did not the pagan historian afterwards relate, that the ending of the drought was due to the prayers and sacrifices, not of Elijah, but of her own father who was Baal's priest and king?[1] Yet, for all her spirit of defiance, we can hardly doubt that the feelings of Jezebel towards Elijah had much of dread mingled with her hatred. She must have felt towards him much as Mary Queen of Scots felt towards John Knox—of whom she said that she feared his prayers more than an army of one hundred thousand men.[2]

"May we really venture," asks Canon Cheyne, "to *look* out for answer to prayer? Did not Elijah live in the *heroic* ages of faith? No; God still works miracles. Take an instance from the early history of Christian Europe. You know the terror excited by the Huns, who in the sixth century after Christ pene-

[1] Menander of Ephesus (Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 2).

[2] Eisenlohr, *Das Volk Israel*, p. 162.

trated into the very heart of Christian France. Already they had occupied the suburbs of Orleans, and the people who were incapable of bearing arms lay prostrate in prayer. The governor sent a message to observe from the ramparts. Twice he looked in vain, but the third time he reported a small cloud on the horizon. 'It is the aid of God,' cried the Bishop of Orleans. It was the dust raised by the advancing squadrons of Christian troops."[1]

A much nearer parallel, and that a very remarkable one, may be quoted.[2] It records—and the fact itself, explain it how men will, seems to be unquestionable—how a storm of rain came to answer the prayer of a good leader of the Evangelical Revival—Grimshaw, rector of Haworth. Distressed at the horrible immoralities introduced among his parishioners by some local races, and wholly failing to get them stopped, he went to the racecourse, and, flinging himself on his knees in an agony of supplication, entreated God to interpose and save his people from their moral danger. He had scarcely ceased his prayer when down rushed a storm of rain so violent as to turn the racecourse into a swamp, and render the projected races a matter of impossibility.

[1] He refers to Gibbon, iv. 232.

[2] See Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brönte*.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ELIJAH'S FLIGHT.

1 KINGS xix. 1—4.

"A still small voice comes through the wild,
Like a father consoling his fretful child,
Which banisheth bitterness, wrath and fear,
Saying, 'Man is distant, but God is near.'"

TEMPLE.

THE misgiving which, joined to his ascetic dislike of cities, made Elijah stop his swift race at the entrance of Jezreel was more than justified. Ahab's narrative of the splendid contest at Carmel produced no effect upon Jezebel whatever, and we can imagine the bitter objurgations which she poured upon her cowering husband for having stood quietly by while *her* prophets and Baal's prophets were being massacred by this dark fanatic, aided by a rebellious people. Had *she* been there all should have been otherwise! In contemptuous defiance of Ahab's fears or wishes, she then and there —and it must now have been after nightfall—despatched a messenger to find Elijah, wherever he might be hiding himself, and say to him in her name: "As sure as thou art Elijah, and I am Jezebel,[1] may my gods avenge it upon me if on the morrow by this time I have not made thy life like the life of one of my own

[1] LXX., 1 Kings xix. 2.

murdered priests." In the furious impetuosity of the message we see the determination of the sorceress-queen. In her way she was as much in deadly earnest as Elijah was. Whether Baal had been defeated or not, *she* was not defeated, and Elijah should not escape her vengeance. The oath shows the intensity of her rage, like that of the forty Jews who bound themselves by the *cherem* that they would not eat or drink till they had slain Paul; and the fixity of her purpose as when Richard III. declared that he would not dine till the head of Buckingham had fallen on the block. We cannot but notice the insignificance to which she reduced her husband, and the contempt with which she treated the voice of her people. She presents the spectacle, so often reproduced in history and reflected in literature, of a strong fierce woman—a Clytemnestra, a Brunhault, a Lady Macbeth, an Isabella of France, a Margaret of Anjou, a Joan of Naples, a Catherine de Medicis—completely dominating a feebler consort.

The burst of rage which led her to send the message defeated her own object. The awfulness which invested Elijah, and the supernatural powers on which he relied, when he was engaged in the battles of the Lord, belonged to him only in his public and prophetic capacity. As a man he was but a poor, feeble, lonely subject, whose blood might be shed at any moment. He knew that God works no miracles for the supersession of ordinary human precautions. It was no part of his duty to throw away his life, and give a counter triumph to the Baal-worshippers whom he had so signally humiliated. He fled, and went for his life

Swift flight was easy to that hardy frame and that trained endurance, even after the fearful day on Carmel and the wild race of fifteen miles from Carmel to

Jezreel. It was still night, and cool, and the haunts and byways of the land were known to the solitary and hunted wanderer. "He feared, and he rose, and he went for his life," ninety-five miles to Beersheba, once a town of Simeon, now the southern limit of the kingdom of Judah, thirty-one miles south of Hebron.[1] But in the tumult of his feelings and the peril of his position he could not stay in any town. At Beersheba he left his servant—perhaps, as legend says, the boy of Zarephath, who became the prophet Jonah—but, in any case, not so much a servant as a youth in training for the prophetic office. It was necessary for him to spend his dark hour alone; for, if there are hours in which human sympathy is all but indispensable, there are also hours in which the soul can tolerate no communion save that with God.[2] So, leaving all civilisation behind him, he plunged a day's journey into that great and terrible wilderness of Paran, where he too was alone with the wild beasts. And then, utterly worn out, he flung himself down under the woody stem of a solitary rhotem plant.[3] The plant is the wild broom with "its cloud of pink blossoms" which often afford the only shadow under the glaring sun in the waste and weary land, and beneath the slight but grateful shade of which

[1] The touch "which belongeth to Judah" shows that the Elijah-narrative emanated from some prophet in the northern schools. In later days it was much visited by pilgrims from the Northern Kingdom (Amos v. 5, viii. 14).

[2] Matt. xxvi. 36.

[3] 1 Kings xix. 4, 5, רֹתֶם אֶחָת; Vulg., *subter unam juniperum*. The plant is the *Genista monosperma*, with papilionaceous flowers. Not "juniper," as in Luther (*Wachholder*) and the A.V. LXX., *ῥαθμὲν φύτον*. See Robinson, *Researches*, i. 203, 205. It gave its name to the station Rithmah (Numb. xxxiii. 18) and the Wadies Retemît and Retâmah.

the Arab to this day is glad to pitch his tent. And there the pent-up emotions of his spirit, which had gone through so tremendous a strain, broke up as in one terrible sob, when the strong man, like a tired child, "requested for himself that he might die."[1]

Of what use was life any longer? He had fought for Jehovah, and won, and after all been humiliatingly defeated. He had prophesied the drought, and it had withered and scorched up the erring, afflicted land. He had prayed for the rain, and it had come in a rush of blessing on the reviving fields. In the Wady Cherith, in the house of the Phœnician widow, he had been divinely supported and sheltered from hot pursuit. He had snatched her boy from death. He had stood before kings, and not been ashamed. He had stretched forth his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people, and not in vain. He had confounded the rich-vested and royally maintained band of Baal's priests, and in spite of their orgiastic leapings and self-mutilations had put to shame their Sun-god under his own burning sun. He had kept pace with Ahab's chariot-steeds as he conducted him, as it were in triumph, through the streaming downpour of that sweeping storm, to his summer capital. Of what use was it all? Was it anything but a splendid and deplorable failure? And he said: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." He could have cried with the poet:—

> "Let the heavens burst, and drown with deluging rain
> The feeble vassals of lust, and anger, and wine,
> The little hearts that know not how to forgive;
> Arise, O God, and strike, for we count Thee just,—
> We are not worthy to live."

Who does not know something of this feeling of utter

[1] Comp. Moses (Numb. xi. 15), Jonah (Jonah iv. 3).

overwhelming despondency, of bitter disillusionment concerning life and our fellow-men? Some great writer has said, with truth, "that there is probably no man with a soul above that of the brutes that perish, to whom a time has not come in his life, when, were you to tell him that he would not wake to see another day, he would receive the message with something like gladness." There are some whose lives have been so saddened by some special calamity that for long years together they have not valued them. F. W. Robertson, troubled by various sorrows, and worried (as the best men are sure to be) by the petty ecclesiastical persecutions of priests and formalists, wrote in a letter on a friend's death: "How often have I thought of the evening when he left Tours, when, in our boyish friendship, we set our little silver watches exactly together, and made a compact to look at the moon exactly at the same moment that night and think of each other. *I do not remember a single hour in life since then which I would have arrested, and said, 'Let this stay.'*" Melancholy so deep as this is morbid and unnatural, and he himself wrote in a brighter mood: "Positively I will not walk with any one in these tenebrous avenues of cypress and yew. I like sunny rooms and sunny truth. When I had more of spring and warmth I could afford to be prodigal of happiness; but now I want sunlight and sunshine. I desire to enter into those regions where cheerfulness and truth and health of heart and mind reside." Life has its real happiness for those who have deserved, and taken the right method to attain it; but it can never escape its hours of impenetrable gloom, and they sometimes seem to be darkest for the noblest souls. Petty souls are irritated by little annoyances, and the purely selfish

disappointments which avenge the exaggerated claims of our "shivering egotism." But while little mean spirits are tormented by the insect-swarm of little mean worries, great souls are liable to be beaten down by the waves and storms of immense calamities—the calamities which affect nations and churches, the "desperate currents" of whose sins and miseries seem to be sometimes driven through the channels of their single hearts. Only such a man as an Elijah can measure the colossal despondency of an Elijah's heart. In the apparently absolute failure, the seemingly final frustration of such men as these there is something nobler than in the highest personal exaltations of ignobler souls.

"*Now, O Lord, take away my life!*" The prayer, however natural, however excusable, is never right. It is a sign of insufficient faith, of human imperfection; but it is breathed by different persons in a spirit so different that in some it almost rises to nobleness, as in others it sinks quite beneath contempt.

Scripture gives us several specimens of both moods. If Jonah was, indeed, the servant-pupil of Elijah, the legendary story of that meanest-minded of all the prophets—the meanest-minded and paltriest, not perhaps as he was in reality—for of him, historically, we know scarcely anything—but as he is represented in the profound and noble allegory which bears his name—might almost seem to have been written in tacit antithesis to the story of Elijah. Elijah flies only when he has done the mighty work of God, and only when the life is in deadly peril which he would fain save for future emergencies of service; Jonah flies that he may escape, out of timid selfishness, the work of God. Elijah wishes himself dead because he thinks that the glorious purpose of his life has been thwarted, and that the effort under-

taken for the deliverance of his people has failed; Jonah wishes himself dead, first, because he repines at God's mercy, and would prefer that his personal credit should be saved and his personal importance secured than that God should spare the mighty city of Nineveh with its one hundred and twenty thousand little children; and then because the poor little castor-oil plant has withered, which gave him shelter from the noon. Considering the traditional connexion between them, it seems to me impossible to overlook an allusive contrast between the noble and mighty Elijah under his solitary rhotem plant in the wilderness wishing for death in the anguish of a heart "which nobly loathing strongly broke," and the selfish splenetic Jonah wishing himself dead in pettish vexation under his *palma Christi* because Nineveh is forgiven and the sun is hot.

There are indeed times when humanity is tried beyond its capacity, when the cry for restful death is wrung from souls crushed under accumulations of quite intolerable anguish and calamity. In the fret of long-continued sleeplessness, in sick and desolate and half-starved age, in attacks of disease incurable, long-continued, and full of torture, God will surely look with pardoning tenderness on those whose faith is unequal to so terrible a strain. It was pardonable surely of Job to curse the day of his birth when—smitten with elephantiasis, a horror, a hissing, an astonishment, bereaved of all his children, and vexed by the obtrusive orthodoxies of his petty Pharisaic friends; unconscious, too, that it was God's hand which was all the while leading him through the valley of the shadow into the land of righteousness—he cried: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?" In those who have

no hope and are without God in the world, this mood —not when expressed in passing passion as by the saintly man of Uz, but when brooded on and indulged —leads to suicide, and in the one instance recorded in each Testament, an Ahithophel and a Judas, the despairing souls of the guilty:—

> "Into the presence of their God
> Rushed in with insult rude."

But Elijah's mood, little as it was justifiable in this its extreme form, was but the last infirmity of a noble mind. It has often recurred among those grandest of the servants of God who may sink into the deepest dejection from contrast with the spiritual altitudes to which they have soared. It is with them as with the lark which floods the blue air with its passion of almost delirious rapture, yet suddenly, as though exhausted, drops down silent into its lowly nest in the brown furrows. There is but one man in the Old Testament who, as a prophet, stands on the same level as Elijah, —he who stood with Elijah on the snowy heights of Hermon when their Lord was transfigured into celestial brightness, and they spake together of His decease at Jerusalem. And Moses had passed through the same dark hour as that through which Elijah was passing now, when he saw the tears, and heard the murmurs of the greedy, selfish, ungrateful people, who hated their heavenly manna, and lusted for the leeks and fleshpots of their Egyptian bondage. Revolted by this obtrusion upon him of human nature in its lowest meanness, he cried to God under his intolerable burden: "Have I conceived all this people? . . . I am not able to bear all this people alone. . . . And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand; and let me

not see my wretchedness." In Moses, as doubtless in Elijah, so far from being the clamour of whining selfishness, his anguish was part of the same mood which made him offer his life for the redemption of the people; which made St. Paul ready to wish himself anathema from Jesus Christ if thereby he could save his brethren after the flesh. Danton rose into heroism when he exclaimed, "*Que mon nom soit flétri, pourvu que la France soit libre*"; and Whitefield, when he cried, "Perish George Whitefield, so God's work be done" and the Duke of Wellington when—remonstrated with for joining in the last charge at Waterloo, with the shot whistling round his head—he said, "Never mind; the victory is won, and now my life is of no consequence." In great souls the thought of others, completely dominating the base man's concentration in self, may create a despondency which makes them ready to give up their life, not because it is a burden to themselves, but because it seems to them as if their work was over, and it was beyond their power to do more for others.

Tender natures as well as strong natures are liable to this inrush of hopelessness; and if it sometimes kills them by its violence, this is only a part of God's training of them into perfection.

> "So unaffected, so composed a mind,
> So firm, yet soft, so strong, yet so refined,
> Heaven, as its purest gold, by tortures tried:—
> The saint sustained it, but the woman died."[1]

The cherubim of the sanctuary had to be made of the gold of Uphaz, the finest and purest gold. It was only the purest gold which could be tortured by workmanship

[1] Pope's epitaph on Mrs. Elizabeth Corbet, in St. Margaret's Westminster.

into forms of exquisite beauty. The mind of Jeremiah was as unlike that of Elijah's as can possibly be conceived. He was a man of shrinking and delicate temperament, and his life is the most pathetic tragedy among the biographies of Scripture. The mind of Elijah, like those of Dante or Luther or Milton, was all ardour and battle brunt; the mind of Jeremiah, like that of Melancthon, was timid as that of a gentle boy. A man like Dante or Milton, when he stands alone, hated by princes and priests and people, retorts scorn for scorn, and refuses to change his voice to hoarse or mute. Yet even Dante died of a broken heart, and in Milton's mighty autobiographical wail of Samson Agonistes, amid all its trumpet-blast of stern defiance, we read the sad notes:—

> "Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
> Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;
> This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
> No long petition, speedy death,
> The close of all my miseries, and the balm."

When the insolent priest Pashur smote Jeremiah in the face, and put him for a night and a day in the common stocks, the prophet—after telling Pashur that, for this awful insult to God's messenger, his name, which meant "joy far and wide," should be changed into Magor-missa-bib, "terror on every side"—utterly broke down, and passionately cursed the day of his birth.[1] And yet his trials were very far from ended then. Homeless, wifeless, childless, slandered, intrigued against, undermined—protesting apparently in vain against the hollow shams of a self-vaunting reformation—the object of special hatred to all the self-satisfied religionists of his day, the lonely persecuted servant of the Lord

[1] Jer. xx. 1-18.

ended only in exile and martyrdom the long trouble of his eternally blessed but seemingly unfruitful life.

I dwell on this incident in the life of Elijah because it is full of instructiveness. Scripture is not all on a dead level. There are many pages of it which belong indeed to the connected history, and therefore carry on the general lessons of the history, but which are, in themselves, almost empty of any spiritual profit. Only a fantastic and artificial method of sermonising can extract from them, taken alone, any Divine lessons. In these Books of Kings many of the records are simply historical, and in themselves, apart from their place in the whole, have no more religious significance than any other historic facts; but because these annals are the annals of a chosen people, and because these books are written for our learning, we find in them again and again, and particularly in their more connected and elevated narratives, facts and incidents which place Scripture incomparably above all secular literature, and are rich in eternal truth for all time, and for a life beyond life.

It is with such an experience that we are dealing here, and therefore it is worth while, if we can, to see something of its meaning. We may, therefore, be ermitted to linger for a brief space over the causes Elijah's despair, and the method in which God dealt th it.

CHAPTER XL.

ELIJAH'S DESPAIR.

1 Kings xix. 4—8,

"So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself,
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest."

Samson Agonistes.

WHAT are the causes which may drive even a saint of God into a mood of momentary despair as he is forced to face the semblance of final failure?

1. Even the lowest element of such despair has its instructiveness. It was due in part, doubtless, to mere physical exhaustion. Elijah had just gone through the most tremendous conflict of his life. During all that long and most exhausting day at Carmel he had had little or no food, and at the close of it he had run across all the plain with the king's chariot. In the dead of that night, with his life in his hand, he had fled towards Beersheba, and now he had wandered for a whole day in the glare of the famishing wilderness. It does not do to despise the body. If we *are* spirits, yet we *have* bodies; and the body wreaks a stern and humiliating vengeance on those who neglect or despise it. The body reacts upon the mind. "If you rumple the

jerkin, you rumple the jerkin's lining." If we weaken the body too much, we do not make it the slave of the spirit, but rather make the spirit its slave. Even moderate fasting, as a simple physiological fact—if it be *fasting* at all, as distinguished from healthful moderation and wise temperance—tends to increase, and not by any means to decrease, the temptations which come to us from the appetites of the body. Extreme self-maceration—as all ascetics have found from the days of St. Jerome to those of Cardinal Newman—only adds new fury to the lusts of the flesh. Many a hermit and stylite and fasting monk, many half-dazed, hysterical, high-wrought men have found, sometimes without knowing the reason of it, that by wilful and artificial devices of self-chosen saintliness, they have made the path of purity and holiness not easier, but more hard. The body is a temple, not a tomb. It is not permitted us to think ourselves wiser than God who made it, nor to fancy that we can mend His purposes by torturing and crushing it. By violating the laws of physical righteousness we only make moral and spiritual righteousness more difficult to attain.

2. Elijah's dejection was also due to forced inactivity. "What *doest* thou here, Elijah?" said the voice of God to him in the heart of man. Alas! he was doing nothing: there was nothing left for him to do! It was different when he hid by the brook Cherith, or in Zarephath, or in the glades of Carmel. Then a glorious endeavour lay before him, and there was hope. But

> "Life without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
> And hope without an object cannot live."

The mighty vindication of Jehovah in which all the

struggle of his life culminated, had been crowned with triumph, and had failed. It had blazed up like fire, and had sunk back into ashes. To such a spirit as his nothing is so fatal as to have nothing to do and nothing to hope for. "What did the Maréchal die of?" asked a distinguished Frenchman of one of his comrades. "He died of having nothing to do." "Ah!" was the reply; "that is enough to kill the best General of us all."

3. Again, Elijah was suffering from mental reaction. The bow had been bent too long, and was somewhat strained; the tense string needed to have been relaxed before. It is a common experience that some great duty or mastering emotion uplifts us for a time above ourselves, makes us even forget the body and its needs. We remember Jeremy Taylor's description of what he had noticed in the Civil Wars,—that a wounded soldier, amid the heat and fury of the fight, was wholly unconscious of his wounds, and only began to feel the smart of them when the battle had ended and its fierce passion was entirely spent.

Men, even strong men, after hours of terrible excitement, have been known to break down and weep like children. Macaulay, in describing the emotions which succeeded the announcement that the Reform Bill had passed, says that not a few, after the first outburst of wild enthusiasm, were bathed in tears.

And any one who has seen some great orator after a supreme effort of eloquence, when his strength seems drained away, and the passion is exhausted, and the flame has sunk down into its embers, is aware how painful a reaction often follows, and how differently the man looks and feels if you see him when he has passed

into his retirement, pale and weak, and often very sad. After a time the mind can do no more.

4. Further, Elijah felt his loneliness. At that moment indeed he could not bear the presence of any one, but none the less his sense that none sympathised with him, that all hated him, that no voice was raised to cheer him, that no finger was uplifted to help him, weighed like lead upon his spirit. "I only am left." There was awful desolation in that thought. He was alone among an apostatising people. It is the same kind of cry which we hear so often in the life of God's saints. It is the Psalmist crying: "I am become like a pelican in the wilderness, and like an owl that is in the desert. Mine enemies reproach me all the day long, and they that are mad upon me are sworn together against me";[1] or, "My lovers and my neighbours did stand looking upon my trouble, and my kinsmen stood afar off. They also that sought after my life laid snares for me."[2] It is Job so smitten and afflicted that he is half tempted for the moment to curse God and die. It is Isaiah saying of the hopeless wickedness of his people, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." It is Jeremiah complaining, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"[3] It is St. Paul wailing so sadly, "All they of Asia have turned from me. Only Luke is with me." It is the pathos of desolation which breathes through the sad sentence of the Gospels, "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." The anticipation of desertion had wrung from the Lord Jesus the sad

[1] Psalm cii. 6, 8. [2] Psalm xxxviii. 11, 12.
[3] Jer. v. 31, xxix. 9.

prophesy, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, when ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."[1] And this heart-anguish of loneliness is, to this day, a common experience of the best men. Any man whose duty has ever called him to strike out against the stream of popular opinion, to rebuke the pleasant vices of the world, to plead for causes too righteous to be popular, to deny the existence of vested interests in the causes of human ruin, to tell a corrupt society that it is corrupt, and a lying Church that it lies;—any man who has had to defy mere plausible conventions of veiled wrong-doing, to give bold utterance to forgotten truths, to awake sodden and slumbering consciences, to annul agreements with death and covenants with hell; every man who rises above the trimmers and the facing-both-ways, and those who try to serve two masters—they who swept away the rotting superstitions of a tyrannous ecclesiasticism, they who purified prisons, they who struck the fetters off the slave—every saint, reformer, philanthropist, and faithful preacher in the past, and those now living saints, who, walking in the shining steps of these, endeavour to rescue the miserable out of the gutter, and to preach the gospel to the poor, know the anguish of isolation, when, because they have been benefactors, they are cursed as though they were felons, and when, for the efforts of their noble self-sacrifice, the contempt of the world, and its pedantry, and its malice can find for them no words too contemptuous or too bitterly false.

5. But there was even a deeper sorrow than these

[1] John xvi. 32.

which made Elijah long for death. It was the sense of utter and seemingly irretrievable failure. It happens often to the worldling as well as to the saint. Many a man, weary of life's inexorable emptiness, has exclaimed in different ways:—

> "Know that whatever thou hast been,
> 'Tis something better not to be."

That sentiment is not in the least peculiar to Byron. We find it again and again in the Greek tragedians. We find it alike in the legendary revelation of the god Pan, and in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and in Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. No true Christian, no believer in the mercy and justice of God, can share that sentiment, but will to the last thank God for His creation and preservation and all the blessings of this life, as well as for the inestimable gift of His redemption, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. Nevertheless, it is part of God's discipline that He often requires His saints as well as His sinners to face what looks like hopeless discomfiture, and to perish, as it were,

> "In the lost battle
> Borne down by the flying,
> Where mingles war's rattle
> With groans of the dying."

Such was the fate of all the Prophets. They were tortured; they had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, they hid in caves and dens of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, though of them the world was not worthy. Such, too, was the

fate of all the Apostles—set forth last of all as men doomed to death; made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. They were hungry, thirsty, naked, buffeted; they had no certain dwelling-place; they were treated as fools and weak, were dishonoured, defamed, treated as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things. Such was conspicuously the case of St. Paul in that death, so lonely and forsaken, that the French sceptic thinks he must have awakened with infinite regret from the disillusionment of a futile life. Nay, it was the earthly lot of Him who was the prototype, and consolation, known or unknown, of all these:—it was the lot of Him who, from that which seemed the infinite collapse and immeasurable abandonment of His cross of shame, cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He warned His true followers that they, too, would have to face the same finality of earthly catastrophes, to die without the knowledge, without even the probable hope, that they have accomplished anything, in utter forsakenment, in a monotony of execration, often in dejection and apparent hiding of God's countenance. The olden saints who prepared the way for Christ, and those who since His coming have followed His footsteps, have had to learn that true life involves a bearing of the cross.

Take but one or two out of countless instances. Look at that humble brown figure, kneeling drowned with tears to think of the disorders which had already begun to creep into the holy order which he had designed. It is sweet St. Francis of Assisi, to whom God said in visions: "Poor little man: thinkest thou that I, who rule the universe, cannot direct in My own way thy little order?" Look at that monk in his friars'

dress, racked, tortured, gibbeted in fetters over the flaming pyre in the great square at Florence, stripped by guilty priests of his priestly robe, degraded from a guilty Church by its guilty representatives, pelted by wanton boys, dying amid a roar of execration from the brutal and fickle multitude whose hearts he once had moved. It is Savonarola, the prophet of Florence. Look at that poor preacher dragged from his dungeon to the stake at Basle, wearing the yellow cap and sanbenito painted with flames and devils. It is John Huss, the preacher of Bohemia. Look at the lion-hearted reformer feeling how much he had striven, not knowing as yet how much he had achieved, appealing to God to govern His world, saying that he was but a powerless man, and would be "the veriest ass alive" if he thought that he could meddle with the intricacies of Divine Providence. It is Luther. Look at the youth, starving in an ink-stained garret, hunted through the streets by an infuriated mob, thrust into the city prison as the only way to save his life from those who hated his exposure of their iniquities. It is William Lloyd Garrison. Look at that missionary, deserted, starving, fever-stricken, in the midst of savages, dying on his knees, in daily sufferings, amid frustrated hopes. It is David Livingstone, the pioneer of Africa. They, and thousands like them, have borne squalors and shames and tragedies, while they looked not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Might not they all have said with the disappointed Apostles, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing"? Might not their lives and deaths—the lives which fools thought madness, and their end to be without honour—

be described as one poet has described that of his disenchanted king:—

> "He walked with dreams and darkness, and he found
> A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
> An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
> Death in all life, and lying in all love,
> The meanest having power upon the highest,
> And the high purpose broken by the worm."

"Yes; the smelter of Israel had now to go down himself into the crucible."[1]

[1] Krummacher.

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW GOD DEALS WITH DESPONDENCY.

1 KINGS xix. 5—8.

"Why art thou so vexed, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God; for I will yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.—PSALM xlii. 11.

"IT is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

The despondency was deeper than personal. It was despair of the world; despair of the fate of the true worship; despair about the future of faith and righteousness; despair of everything. Elijah, in his condition of pitiable weariness, felt himself reduced to entire uncertainty about all God's dealings with him and with mankind. "I am not better than my fathers": *they* failed one by one, and died, and entered the darkness; and I have failed likewise. To what end did Moses lead this people through the wilderness? Why did the Judges fight and deliver them? Of what use was the wise guidance of Samuel? What has come of David's harp, and Solomon's temple and magnificence, and Jeroboam's heaven-directed rebellion? It ends, and my work ends, in the despotism of Jezebel, and a nation of apostates!

God pitied His poor suffering servant, and gently

led him back to hope and happiness, and restored him to his true self, and to the natural elasticity of his free spirit.

1. First, he gave His beloved sleep. Elijah lay down and slept. Perhaps this was what he needed most of all. When we lose that dear oblivion of "nature's soft nurse, and sweet restorer, balmy sleep," then nerve and brain give way. So God sent him

> "The innocent sleep,
> Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast."

And doubtless, while he slept, "his sleeping mind," as the Greek tragedian says, "was bright with eyes," and He, who had thus "steeped his senses in forgetfulness," spoke peace to his troubled heart, or breathed into it the rest over which hope might brood with her halcyon wings.

2. Next, God provided him with food. When he awoke he saw that at his head, under the rhotem-plant, God had spread him a table in the wilderness. It was a provision, simple indeed, but for his moderate wants more than sufficient—a cake baked on the coals[1] and a cruse of water. A *Maleakh*—a "messenger"—"some one," as the Septuagint and as Josephus both render it,[2] some one who was, to him at any rate, an angel of God—touched him, and said, "Arise and eat." He ate and drank, and thus refreshed lay down again to

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[1] The *coals* (*reshaphim*) for the cake (LXX., ἐγκρυφίας ὀλυρίτης; Vulg., *subcinericius panis*) were the dry twigs of the broom plant, still sold for that purpose in the markets of Cairo. Comp. Psalm cxx. 4; "*coals of juniper.*"

[2] 1 Kings xix. 5. מַלְאָךְ means "a messenger," and in verse 2 is used of the messenger of Jezebel.

make up, perhaps, for long arrears of unrest. And again God's messenger, human or angelic, touched him, and bade him rise and eat once more, or his strength would fail in the journey which lay before him. For he meant to plunge yet farther into the wilderness. In the language of the narrator, "He arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights."

3. Next God sent him on a hallowed pilgrimage to bathe his weary spirit in the memories of a brighter past.

It does not require forty days and forty nights, nor anything like so long a period, to get from one day's journey in the wilderness to Horeb, the Mount of God, which was Elijah's destination. The distance does not exceed one hundred and eighty miles even from Beersheba. But, as in the case of Moses and of our Lord, "forty days"—a number connected by many associations with the idea of penance and temptation—symbolises the period of Elijah's retirement and wanderings. No doubt, too, the number has an allusive significance, pointing back to the forty years' wanderings of Israel in the wilderness. The Septuagint omits the words "of God," but there can be little doubt that Sinai was selected for the goal of Elijah's pilgrimage with reference to the awful scenes connected with the promulgation of the law. It is well known that the Mount of the Commandments is as a rule called Sinai in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, though the name Horeb occurs in Exod. iii. 1, xxxiii. 6. To account for the double usage there have been, since the Middle Ages, two theories: (1) that Horeb is the name of the range, and Sinai of the mountain; (2) that Horeb properly means the northern part of the range, and Sinai

the southern, especially Jebel Mousa. Horeb is the prevalent name for the mountain in Deuteronomy; Sinai is the ordinary name, and occurs thirty-one times in the Old Testament.

After his wanderings Elijah reached Mount Sinai, and came to "the cave," and took shelter there. The use of the article shows that a particular cave is meant, and there can be little reason to discredit the almost immemorial tradition that it is the hollow still pointed out to hundreds of pilgrims as the scene of the theophany which was here granted to Elijah. Perhaps in the same cave the vision had been granted to Moses, in the scene to which this narrative looks back. It is not so much a cave as, what it is called in Exodus, a "cleft of the rock."[1] From the foot of the mountain, the level space on which now stands the monastery of Saint Katherine, a steep and narrow pathway through the rocks leads up to Jebel Mousa, the southernmost peak of Sinai, which is seven thousand feet high. Half-way up this mountain is a little secluded plain in the inmost heart of the granite precipice, in which is an enclosed garden, and a solitary cypress, and a spring and pool of water, and a little chapel. Inside the chapel is shown a hole, barely large enough to contain the body of a man. "It is," says Dr. Allon, "a temple not made with hands, into which, through a stupendous granite screen, which shuts out even the Bedouin world, God's priests may enter to commune with Him."[2]

If, indeed, Elijah had heard by tradition the vision of Moses of which this was the scene, he must have been filled with awful thoughts as he rested in the same

[1] Exod. xxxiii. 22. [2] *Bible Educator*, iii. 155.

narrow fissure, and recalled what had been handed down respecting the manifestation of Jehovah to his mighty predecessor.

4. And as God had pointed out to him the way to restore his bodily strength by sleep and food, so now He opened before the Prophet the remedy of renewed activity. The question of the Lord came to him—it was re-echoed by the voice of his own conscience—"What doest thou here, Elijah?"

"What doest thou?" He was doing nothing! He had, indeed, fled for his life; but was all the rest of his life to be so different from its beginning? Was there, indeed, no more work to be done in Israel or in Judah, and was he tamely to allow Jezebel to be the final mistress of the situation? Was one alien and idolatrous woman to overawe God's people Israel, and to snatch from God's prophet all the fruits of his righteous labours? "What doest *thou* here, Elijah?" Is not the very significance of thy name "Jehovah, He is my God"? Is He to be the God but of one fugitive? "What doest thou *here*?" This is the wilderness. There are no idolaters or murderers, or breakers of God's commandments here; but are there not multitudes in the crowded cities where Baal's temple towers over Samaria, and his sun-pillars cast their offensive shadows? Are there not multitudes in Jezreel, where the queen's Asherah-shrine amid its guilt-shrouding trees flings its dark protection over unhallowed orgies committed in the name of religion? Should there not have been inspiration as well as reproof in the mere question? Should it not mean to him, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God, for I will yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God"?

5. The question stirred the heart of Elijah, but did not yet dispel his sense of hopelessness and frustration, nor did it restore his confidence that God would govern the world aright. As yet it only called forth the heavy murmur of his grief. "I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of Hosts": I, alone among my people; "for the children of Israel"—not the wicked queen only, with her abominations and witchcrafts, but the renegade people with her—"have forsaken Thy covenant," which forbids them to have any God but Thee, and have "thrown down Thine altars,[1] and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." It was as it were an appeal to Jehovah before whom he stood, if not almost a reproach to Him. It was as though he said, "I have done my utmost; I have failed: wilt not Thou put forth Thy power and reign? I am but one poor hunted prophet alone against the world. There is no prophet more: not one is there among them that understandeth any more. I can do no more. Of what use is my life? Carest Thou not that Thy people have revolted from Thee? Behold they perish; they perish, they all perish! Of what use is my life? My work has failed: let me die!"

6. God dealt with this mood as He has done in all ages, as He had done before to Jacob, as He did afterwards to David and to Hezekiah, and to Isaiah and Jeremiah; and as the Son of God did to the antitype of Elijah—the great forerunner—when his faith failed him. He let the conviction steal into his mind that the ways of God are wider than men, and His thoughts

[1] The use of the plural, and the absence of any objections to an uncentralised worship, are proofs of the northern origin of the Elijah-episode.

greater than men's. He unteaches His prophet the delusion that everything depends on *him*. He shows him that though He works for men by men, and though

> "God cannot make best man's best
> Without best men to help Him,"

still no living man is necessary, nor can any man, however great, either hasten or understand the purposes of God.

Elijah had need to be taught that man is nothing—that God is all in all. Instead of answering his complaint, the voice said to him: "Go forth to-morrow, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. Behold, the Lord is passing by." [1]

[1] LXX., αὔριον; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 7; Comp. Exod. xxxiv. 2. It is hardly likely that the stupendous vision would follow instantly and without a moment's preparation.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE THEOPHANY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

1 KINGS xix. 9—15.

'Who heardest the rebuke of the Lord in Sinai, and in Horeb the judgment of vengeance."—ECCLUS. xlviii. 7.

THROUGHOUT the Scriptures infinite care is taken to preclude every notion that the Most High God can be represented in visible form. He manifested Himself at Sinai to the children of Israel, but though the mount burned with fire, and there were clouds and thick darkness, and the voice of a trumpet speaking long and loud, the people were reminded with the utmost solemnity that "they saw no manner of similitude."[1] Indeed, in later times, when there was a keener jealousy of every anthropomorphic expression, the giving of the law is rather represented as a part of the ministry of angels. The word *Makom*, or "Place," is substituted for Jehovah, so that Moses and the elders and the Israelites do not see God but only His *Makom*, the space which He fills;[2] the delivery of the

[1] Deut. iv. 12, 15, (comp. v. 4, 22, 23). Of Moses, on the other hand, it is said, "the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Numb. xii. 8; Exod. xxxiii. 11; Deut. xxxiv. 10).

[2] מָקוֹם, *τόπος*, "place," was a sort of recognised euphemism for God in Rabbinic and Alexandrian exegesis. Thus, in Exod. xxiv. 10, for "they saw *the God of Israel*," the LXX. have *εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ*

law is ascribed to angelic ministers. At times the angels are almost identified with the careering flames and rushing winds which a modern theologian describes to us as being "the skirts of their garments, the waving of their robes"; for is it not written, "He that maketh the winds His angels and the flaming fires His ministers"?[1] And in the daring description of Jehovah's visible manifestation of Himself to Moses, when He hid him in that fissure of the rock with the hollow of His hand, Moses only observes as it were the fringe and evanishment of His glory, "dark with excessive light."

It was natural that Jehovah should reveal Himself to Elijah under the aspect of those awful elemental forces with which his solitary life had made him familiar. No spot in the world is more suitable for those powers in all their fire and magnificence than the knot of mountains which crowd the Sinaitic peninsula with their entangled cliffs. Travellers have borne witness to the overwhelming violence and majesty of the storms which rush and reverberate through the granite gorges of those everlasting hills. It was in such surroundings that Jehovah spoke to the heart of his servant.

First "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, before the Lord."[2] The

εἰστήκει ὁ θεός. Philo says, "God Himself is called Place" (*De Somn.*, i. 525). Rabbi Isaac says, "God is not in Makom, but Makom is in God." See my Bampton Lectures on *Hist. of Interpretation*, p. 120; *Early Days of Christianity*, i. 261.

[1] Psalm civ. 4; Heb. i. 7. This intermediacy of angels is prominently alluded to in Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2, 3; Deut. xxxiii. 2; Psalm lxviii. 17.

[2] The anthropomorphism which the Targumists disliked vanishes in the Chaldee: "And before Him was a host of angels of the wind rending the moutains, and breaking the rocks, before the Lord

winds of God, which blow where they list, and we know not whence they come nor whither they go, have in them so awful and irresistible a strength, that man and the works of man, are reduced to impotence before them. And when they rush and roar through the gullies of innumerable hills in tropic lands where the intense heat has rarefied the air, the sound of them is beyond all comparison weird and terrific. We cannot wonder that this roar of the hurricane was regarded as the trump of the archangel and the voice of God at Sinai; or that the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind;[1] and appeared to Ezekiel in a great cloud and a whirlwind out of the north;[2] or that Jeremiah compared His anger to a whirling and sweeping storm;[3] or that the Psalmist describes Him as bowing the heavens and coming down and casting darkness under His feet, and flying upon a cherub, and walking upon the wings of the wind;[4] or that Nahum says, "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet, . . . and the mountains quake at Him."[5]

And Elijah felt the terror of the scene, as the storm dislodged huge masses of the mountain granite, and sent them rolling and crashing down the hills. But it did not speak to his inmost heart: for

"The Lord was not in the wind."

And after the wind an earthquake shook the solid

but the Shechînah was not in the hosts of the angels of the wind, and after the hosts of the angels of the wind was the host of the angel of the earthquake, etc."

[1] Job xxxviii. 1, xl. 6.

[2] Ezek. i. 4.

[3] Jer. xxiii. 19, 20, xxv. 32, xxx. 23.

[4] Psalms xviii. 10, civ. 3, 5.

[5] Nahum i. 3, 5.

bases of the Sinaitic range. The mountain saw God and trembled. The Lord, in the language of the Psalmist, shook the wilderness of Kadesh, the mountains skipped like rams and the little hills like young sheep.[1] And man never feels so abjectly helpless, he is never reduced to such absolute insignificance, as when the solid earth beneath him, the very emblem of stability, trembles as with a palsy, and cleaves beneath his feet; and shakes his towers to the earth, and swallows up his cities. Once more the soul of Elijah shuddered at the terrific impression of this sign of Jehovah's power. But it had no message for his inmost heart: for

"The Lord was not in the earthquake."

And after the earthquake a fire. Jehovah overwhelmed the Prophet's senses with the dread magnificence of one of those lurid thunderstorms of which the terrors are never so tremendous as in such mountain scenes, where travellers tell us that the burning air seems transfused into sheets of flame. In that awful muttering and roar of the lurid clouds, that millionfold reverberation of what the Psalmist calls "the voice of the Lord," when the lightnings "light the world, and run along the ground," and, in the language of Habakkuk, "God sends abroad His arrows, and the light of His glittering spear, and burning coals go forth under His feet, the lips of man quiver at the voice, and his heart sinks, and he trembles where he stands." And this, too, Elijah must have felt as "the hiding-place of God's power":[2] and yet it did not speak to his inmost heart; for

"The Lord was not in the fire."

"And after the fire a still small voice."

[1] Psalm xviii. 7, lxxvii. 18, xcvii. 4; Judg. v. 4; 2 Sam. xxii. 8.

[2] Hab. iii. 3-16.

However the rendering may be altered into "a gentle murmuring sound," or, as in the Revised Version, "a sound of gentle stillness," no expression is more full of the awe and mystery of the original than the phrase "a still small voice."[1] It was the shock of awful stillness which succeeded the sudden cessation of the earthquake and hurricane and thunderstorm, and instantly, in its appalling hush and gentleness, Elijah felt that God was there; and he no sooner heard that voiceful silence speaking within him than he was filled with fear and self-abasement. He wrapped his face in his mantle, even as Moses "was afraid to look upon God." He came from the hollow of the rock which had sheltered him amidst that turbulence of material forces, and stood in the entering in of the cave.

At once the silence became articulate to his conscience, and repeated to him the reproachful question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Amazed and overwhelmed as he is, he has not yet grasped the meaning of the vision. Something of it perhaps he saw and felt. It breathed something of peace into the despair and tumult of his heart, but he still can only answer as before:—

"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Whatever that theophany had taught him, it had not yet fully removed his perplexity. But now God, in tender forbearance, unfolds at any rate the practical issue of the vision. Elijah is to be inactive no longer.

[1] 1 Kings xix. 12; LXX., φωνὴ αὔρας λεπτῆς; Vulg., ***Sibilus auræ tenuis***; Chaldee, "a voice of angels singing in silence."

He is to find in faithfulness and work the removal of all doubts, and is to learn that man may not abandon his duties, even when they are irksome, even when they seem hopeless, even when they have become intolerable and full of peril. He has to learn that it is only when men have finished their day's work that God sends them sleep, and that his own day's work was as yet unfinished. He is no longer to linger in the wilderness apart from the ways of guilty and suffering men. He is one with them: he may not separate his destiny from theirs; he has to feel that God has no favourites and is no respecter of persons, but that all men are His children, and that each child of His must work for all. "Go," the Lord said unto him, "return on thy way by the wilderness to Damascus." Did the return involve unknown dangers? Still he must commit his way unto the Lord, and simply be doing good, regardless of all consequences. The saints of the Old Dispensation no less than of the New had to go forth bearing their cross, and on their way to Golgotha.

Three missions still awaited him.

First, he is to supersede the old dynasty of Benhadad, King of Syria, founded by Solomon's enemy, and to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

Next, he is to abolish the dynasty of Omri, and to anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel.[1]

Thirdly—and there was deep significance in this behest, and one which must have humiliated to the dust the risings of pride and the half-reproach, so to speak, for inadequate support which had underlain his appeal to Jehovah—he is to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel-meholah, to be prophet in his room.

[1] Jehu was the grandson of Nimshi, and was the son of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings ix. 2).

Elijah had thought himself necessary—an indispensable agent for the task of delivering Israel from the guilty and demoralising apostasy of Baal-worship. God teaches him that there is no such thing as a necessary man; that man at his best estate is altogether vanity; that God is all in all; that "God buries His workmen, but continues His work."

And something of the meaning of these tasks is explained to him. The people of Israel are not yet converted. They still needed the hand of chastisement. The three years' drought had been ineffectual to wean them from their backslidings, and turn their hearts again to the Lord. On the royal house and on the worshippers of Baal should fall the remorseless sword of Jehu. On the whole nation the ruthless invasions of Hazael should press with terrible penalty. And him that escaped from their avenging missions should Elisha slay. The last clause is enigmatical. Elisha can hardly be said directly to have slain any. He lived, on the whole, in friendship with the kings both of Israel and of Aram, and in peace and honour in the cities. But the general idea seems to be that he would carry on the mission of Elijah alike for the guidance and the heaven-directed punishments of kings and nations, and that the famines, raids, and humiliations which rendered his nation miserable under the sons of Ahab should be elements of his sacred mission.[1]

One more revelation remained to lift the Prophet above his lower self. His cry had been, again and again: "I, I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." He must not indulge the mistaken fancy that the worship of the true God would die with

[1] Isa. xi. 4, xlix. 2; comp. Jer. i. 10, xviii. 7.

him, or that God needed his advice, or that God was slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. He was not the only faithful person left, nor would truth perish when he was called away. Nor is he to judge only by outward appearances, nor to suppose that the arm of God can be measured by the finger of man. A new prophet is soon to take his place, but God has not been so neglectful as he supposes,—"Yet," in spite of all thy murmurings of failure and a frustrated purpose—"yet will I leave Me"—not *thee, thee only*—"but *seven thousand* in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him." [1]

It has been regarded as a difficulty that Elijah fulfilled but one of the three behests. But Scripture does not narrate events with the finical and pragmatic accuracy of modern annals. Elisha, directly or indirectly, caused both Jehu to be anointed and Hazael to ascend the throne of Syria, and we are left to infer that in these deeds he carried out the instructions of his Master.

It is a more serious question, What was the exact meaning of the theophany granted to Elijah on the Mount of God?

Here, too, we are left to large and liberal applications. The greatest utterances of men, the loftiest works of human genius, often admit of manifold interpretations, and lend themselves to "springing and germinal developments." Far more is this the case in the

[1] Comp. Rom. xii. 5. Kissing images was a sign of idolatry then as it is now. The foot of the statue of St. Peter in Rome is worn away with kisses. Hosea xiii. 2 tells us of the custom of kissing the calves. Comp. Psalm ii. 12. Cicero tells us that the lovely brazen statue of Hercules at Agrigentum had the mouth and chin partly worn away by the kisses of the devout (in *Verr.*, iv. 43).

revelations of God to the spirit of man. We can see the main truths which were involved in that mighty scene, even if the narrator of it leaves unexplained its central significance.

It is usually interpreted as a reproof to the spirit which led Elijah to regard the tempestuous manifestations of wrath and vengeance as the normal methods of the interposition of God. He was fresh from the stern challenge of Carmel; his hands were yet red with the blood of those four hundred and fifty priests. It was perhaps needful for him to learn that God's gentler agencies are more effectual and more expressive of His inmost nature, and that God is Love even though He can by no means clear the guilty. Something of this lesson has been at all times learnt from the narrative.[1]

"The raging fire, the roaring wind,
Thy boundless power display;
But in the gentler breeze we find
Thy Spirit's viewless way.

"The dew of heaven is like Thy grace,
It steals in silence down;
But where it lights, the favoured place
By richest fruits is known."

Quite naturally men have always seen in the storm,

[1] Herder, who was a devout poet, and therefore a true imaginative interpreter of devout poetry, says: "The vision was to show the fiery zeal of the Prophet that would amend everything by the storm, the mild process of God, and proclaim His longsuffering tender nature as previously the voice did to Moses: hence the scene was so beautifully changed." Long before him the wise Theodoret had said: "Διὰ δὲ τούτων ἔδειξεν ὅτι μακροθυμία καὶ φιλανθρωπία μόνη φίλη Θεῷ." Irenæus, still earlier (*c. Hær.*, iv. 27), saw in the vision an emblem of the difference between the law and the gospel; and Grotius, following him, says, "Evangelii figuratio, quod non venit cum vento, terræ motu, et fulminibus ut lex," Exod. xix. 16 (see Keil, *ad loc.*, whose illustrations are often valuable when his exegesis is false and obsolete).

the earthquake, and the fire, the presence of God as manifested in His wrath. "Then the earth shook and trembled," says the Psalmist; "the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth. There went up a smoke in His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals burnt forth from it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and swooped down: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind."[1] "I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, at the wrath of the Lord."[2] "Thou shalt be visited," says Isaiah, "of the Lord of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire."[3] On the other hand, in His mercy God "maketh the storm a calm." When He reveals Himself in a vision of the night to Eliphaz the Temanite "a wind passed before my face, so that the hair of my head stood up, and there was silence, and I heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be great before God? shall a man be pure before his Maker?" These passages in no small measure explain the symbolism of Elijah's vision, and point to its essential significance. Who can measure (asks Mr. Ruskin) the total effect produced upon the minds of men by the phenomenon of a single thunderstorm?—"the questioning of the forest leaves together in their terrified stillness which way the wind shall come—the murmuring together of the Angels of Destruction as they draw in the distance their swords of flame—the rattling of the dome of heaven under the chariot wheels of death?"

[1] Psalm xviii. 7-9; comp 2 Sam. xxii. 8-11.
[2] Isa. xiii. 13.
[3] Isa. xxix. 6; comp. Ecclus. xxxix. 28.

Yet it is not the thunderstorms nor the hurricanes that have been most powerful in altering the face or moulding the structure of the world, but rather the long continuance of Nature's most gentle influences.

Viewing the vision thus, we may say that it pointed forward to that transcendently greater than Elijah who did not strive, nor cry, nor was His voice heard in the streets. "There is already a gospel of Elijah. He, the farthest removed of all the Prophets from the evangelical spirit and character, had yet enshrined in the heart of his story the most forcible of all protests against the hardness of Judaism, the noblest anticipation of the breadth and depth of Christianity." This view of the passage is taken, with slight modifications, by many, from Irenæus down to Grotius and Calvin, and modern commentators.

Similarly it is a universal law of history that, while some mighty and tumultuous energy may be needed to initiate the first movement or upheaval, the greatest work is done by gentler agencies. As in the old fable, the quiet shining of the sun effects more than the bluster of the storm. Love is stronger than force, and persuasion than compulsion. Mr. J. S. Mill treats it not only as a platitude but as a falsity to assert that truth cannot be suppressed by violence. He says that (for instance) the truths brought into prominence by the Reformation had been again and again suppressed by the brutal tyrannies of the Papacy. But in all these instances has not the truth ultimately prevailed? Is it not a fact of experience that

> "Truth, pressed to earth, shall rise again,
> The eternal years of God are hers;
> But error, wounded, writhes in pain
> And dies among her worshippers"?

The truth prevails and the error dies under the slow light of knowledge and by the long results of time.

Nor is it any answer to this view of the revelation to Elijah on the Mount of God that there is not the slightest proof of his having learnt any such lesson, or of such a lesson having been deduced from it by the narrator himself. Neither Elijah, it has been said, nor the writer of the Book of Kings, felt the smallest regret for the avenging deed of Carmel. Their consciences approved of it. They looked on it with pride, not with compunction. This is shown by the subsequently recorded story of Elijah's calling down fire from heaven on the unfortunate captains and soldiers of Ahaziah, in whatever light we regard that story which was evidently current in the Schools of the Prophets. If the massacre of the priests cannot be regarded as morally excusable, the destruction of these royal emissaries by consuming fire was certainly much less so. The vision may have had a deeper significance than Elijah or the Schools of the Prophets understood, just as the words of Jesus often had a deeper significance than was dreamt of even by the Apostles when they heard them. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. Neither Elijah nor the sacred historian may have grasped all that was meant by the wind, and earthquake, and fire, and still small voice.

"As little children sleep and dream of heaven,
So thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given."

It is scarcely more than another aspect of the many-sided truth that love is more potent and more Divine than violence, if we also see in this incident a foreshadowing of the truth, so necessary for the impatient

souls of men, that God neither hasteth nor resteth; that He is patient because Eternal; that a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday, seeing that it is past as a dream in the night. Something of this we learn from the study of nature. It used to be thought that the upheaval of the continents and the rearing of the great mountains was due to cataclysms and conflagrations and vast explosions of volcanic force. It has long been known that they are due, on the contrary, to the inconceivably slow modifications produced by the most insignificant causes. It is the age-long accumulation of mica-flakes which has built up the mighty bastions of the Alps. It is the toil of the ephemeral coral insect which has reared whole leagues of the American Continent and filled the Pacific Ocean with those unnumbered isles

> "Which, like to rich and various gems, inlay
> The unadorned bosom of the deep."

It is the slow silting up of the rivers which has created vast deltas for the home of man. It has required the calcareous deposit of millions of animalculæ to produce even one inch of the height of the white cliffs along the shores. Even so the thoughts of man have been made more merciful in the slow course of ages, and quiet, incommensurable influences have caused all those advances in civilisation and humanity which elevate our race. The "bright invisible air" has produced effects incomparably more stupendous than the wild tornadoes. "That air, so gentle, so imperceptible, is more powerful, not only than all the creatures that breathe and live by it, not only than all the oaks of the forest which it rears in an age and shatters in a moment, not only than the monsters of the sea, but than the sea

itself, which it tosses up with foam and breaks upon every rock in its vast circumference; for it carries in its bosom all perfect calm, and compresses the incontrollable ocean and the peopled earth, like an atom of a feather."[1]

"Thus regarded," says Professor Van Oort, "the picture of Elijah at Mount Horeb is full of consolation to all lovers of the truth. Sometimes they cry, All is lost! and are ready to despair. But God answers, Never lose heart. Storms in which God is not, in which the power of darkness seems to sweep unbridled and unconquered o'er the earth, come before the whispering of the cooling breeze, but the kingdom of peace and blessedness is ever drawing nigh. Let all who love God truly, work for its 'approach.'"

Let us then cling to the lesson that mercy is better than sacrifice, and is transcendently to be preferred to holocausts of human sacrifice, even when the victims are polluted and cruel idolaters. Scripture never hides from us the imperfections of its heroes, and St. James tells us that Elijah was but a man of like passions with ourselves. The progress of the generations, the slow shining of the light of God, has not been in vain, and we can see truths and read the meaning of theophanies by the experience of three subsequent milleniums, of which two have followed the incarnation of the Son of God.

[1] W. S. Landor.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CALL OF ELISHA.

1 KINGS xix. 19—21.

"The one remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light alone remains, earth's shadows flee."
SHELLEY.

WHETHER Elijah saw or saw not all that God had meant by the revelation at Horeb, much at any rate was abundantly clear to him, and the path of new duties lay straight before him.

The first of those duties—the only one immediately possible—was to anoint Elisha as prophet in his room, and so prepare for the continuation of the task which he had been chosen to inaugurate. He had been bidden to return across the wilderness in the direction of Damascus. Whether he traversed the eastern side of Jordan among his own familiar hills of Gilead, and then crossed over at Bethshean, where there was a ford, or whether, braving all danger from Jezebel and her emissaries, he passed through the territories of the western tribes, it is certain that we find him next at Abel-meholah, "the meadow of the dance," which was not far from Bethshean.[1] This, as he knew, was the home of Elisha, his future successor.

The position of Elisha was wholly unlike his own.

[1] 1 Kings iv. 12. It was in the north part of the Jordan valley.

He himself was a homeless Bedawy, bound to earth by no ties of family, coming like the wind and vanishing like the lightning. Elisha, on the other hand, whose history was to be so different and so far less stormy—Elisha, whose work and whose residence was mainly to be in cities—was a child of civilisation. But the civilisation was still that of a society in which anarchic forces were by no means tamed. Dean Stanley, in his sketch of Elisha, seems to dwell too much on his gentleness of spirit. He, too, had to carry out the anointing of Hazael and Jehu. "He was still less capable than Elijah," says Ewald, "of inaugurating a purely benign and constructive mode of action, since at that time the whole spirit of the ancient religion was still unprepared for it."

Elijah found him in the heritage of his fathers, ploughing the rich level land with twelve yoke of oxen. Eleven were with his servants, and he himself guided the twelfth.[1] Elijah must have felt that the youth would have to make a great earthly sacrifice, if he left all this—father and mother and home and lands—to become the disciple and attendant of a wild, wandering, and persecuted prophet. He would say nothing to him. He merely left the high road, and "passed over unto him," as he plowed his fields.[2] Reaching him he took off his shaggy garment of skin, which, in imitation of him, became in after years the normal garb of prophets, and flung it over Elisha's shoulders. This apparently was all the "anointing" requisite, save such as came from the Spirit of God. The act had a twofold symbolism: it meant the adoption of Elisha by Elijah

[1] 1 Kings xix. 19.

[2] The Hebrew can hardly bear the meaning that he was finishing the twelfth furrow in his field, ploughed by his single yoke of oxen.

to be his "*mantelkind*," his spiritual son; and it meant a distinct call to the prophetic office.

At first Elisha seems to have stood still—amazed, almost stupefied, by the sudden necessity for so tremendous a decision. The thought of resigning all the hopes and comforts of ordinary life and of severing so many dear and lifelong ties, could not be unmixed with anguish. Again and again we see in the call of the prophets this natural shrinking, the human reluctance born of humility, frailty, and misgiving. It was so that Moses at the burning bush had at first fought to the utmost against the conviction of his destiny. It was so that Gideon had pleaded that he was but the least of the children of Abiezer. It was thus that, in later days, Jonah fled from the face of the Lord to Tarshish; and Isaiah cried, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips"; and Jeremiah wailed, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child!" And if we may allude to modern instances we know the shrinking hesitations of Luther; and how Cromwell affirmed that he had prayed to God not to put him to his terrible work; and how Wesley hesitated long before he "made himself vile" by preaching in the open air to the Kingswood colliers; and how Father Matthew shrank from his great temperance efforts, till one day, rising from long prayer, and at last convinced of his destined task, he uttered the homely resolve, "In the name of God here goes!"

Elisha did not hesitate long. The mysterious Prophet of Carmel—he whose voice was believed to have shut up the heavens, he who had confounded king and priest and people at Carmel—had spoken no word. He had only flung over Elisha the garment of hair, and then stridden back to the road, and gone on his

way without once looking back. Soon he would have vanished beyond recall. Elisha decided that he would obey the call of God; that he would not make "the great refusal." He ran after Elijah, and overtook him, and, accepting the position to which he had been elevated, made but the one human natural request that he might be suffered first to kiss—that is, to bid final farewell to—his father and mother, and then he would follow Elijah.

The request has often been compared to that of the young scribe who said to Jesus, "Lord, suffer me first to bury my father"; to whom Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their dead: follow thou Me." But the two petitions are not really analogous. The scribe practically asked that he might stay at home till his father died; and as that was an uncertain term, and the ministry of Christ was very brief, the delay was incompatible with such discipleship as Christ then required. There was no such indefinite postponement in Elisha's petition. It showed in him a tender heart, not a reluctant purpose or a wavering will.

"Go back again," answered Elijah; "for what have I done to thee?"

The words are often explained as a veiled yet severe rebuke, as though Elijah had meant to say with scorn, "Go back; perhaps you are not fit for the high call; you do not understand the significance of what I have done;" or, at any rate, "Go back; yet beware of being softly led away from the path of duty; for consider how deep is the meaning of what I have done to thee."

The words involve no such disapprobation, nor does the context agree with that view of them. I can detect no accent of reproof in the words. Elijah, as is shown by several incidents in his career, had room

for tenderness and human affection in his rugged lonely heart. I understand his reply to mean, "Go back; it is right, it is natural that thou shouldst thus bid a last farewell before leaving thy home. Thy coming to me must be purely voluntary; I have but cast my mantle over thee, nothing more. Thine own conscience alone can interpret the full meaning of the act, and God will make thy way clear before thy face."

Such, I believe, was Elijah's free permission. He was no hard Stoic, unnaturally trampling on the sweet affections of the soul. He was no despotic spiritual guide full of gloomy superstition, like the grim Spaniard, Ignatius Loyola, who seemed to hold that God liked even our needless anguish, and our voluntary self-tortures as an acceptable sacrifice to Himself. When St. Francis Xavier, on the journey of the first Jesuits to Rome, passed quite near the castle of his parents and ancestors, the teachings of Loyola would not suffer the young noble to turn aside to print one last kiss upon his mother's cheek. Such hard exactions belong to that sphere of will-worship and voluntary humility which St. Paul condemns. Excessive violence needlessly inflicted on our innocent affections finds no sanction either in ancient Judaism or genuine Christianity.

And it was thus that Elisha understood the Prophet. He went back, and kissed his father and mother, and, like Matthew when he left his toll-booth to follow Christ, he made a great feast to his dependents, kinsfolk, and friends. To mark his complete severance from the happy past he unyoked his pair of oxen, slew them, used the plough and goad and wooden yokes as fuel, boiled the flesh of the oxen, and invited the people to his farewell feast. Then he arose, and went

after Elijah, and ministered unto him. He was thenceforth recognised as a son of the prophetic schools, and as their future head. For the present he became known as "Elisha, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." His subsequent career belongs entirely to the Second Book of Kings.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AHAB AND BENHADAD.

1 KINGS xx. 1—30.

IN the Septuagint and in Josephus the events narrated in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Kings are placed after the meeting of Elijah with Ahab at the door of Naboth's vineyard, which occupies the twenty-first chapter in our version. This order of events seems the more probable, but no chronological data are given us in the long but fragmentary details of Ahab's reign. They are, in fact, composed of different sets of records, partly historical, partly prophetic, and partly taken from some special monograph on the career of Elijah. Here, too, we may observe that some most important details are altogether omitted, and that we only learn them (1) from the inscription of King Mesha, and (2) from the clay tablets of Assyria.

1. As regards King Mesha, the monument containing his very interesting annals is generally known as The Moabite Stone. It is a stele of black basalt, 3 feet 10 inches high, 2 feet broad, 14½ inches thick, rounded at the top and bottom almost into a semicircle. The Phœnician inscription is of capital importance both for philology and history. It was first discovered by Mr. Klein, the German missionary of an English society

at Dibon, east of the Dead Sea, and it is now at the Louvre. Dibon is now Dibbân.

Mr. Klein in 1868, at Jerusalem, informed Professor Petermann of Berlin of the existence of this ancient relic, and from a few letters of the thirty-four lines which he had copied the Professor at once pronounced that the language employed was Phœnician. When M. Clermont Ganneau, the French consul at Jerusalem, endeavoured to get possession of it, the Bedawin discovered that it was regarded with deep interest by European scholars. They immediately began to quarrel over its possession, and the Arab who had been sent to copy it barely escaped with his life. In their greed and jealousy these modern Moabites "sooner than give it up, put a fire under it, and threw cold water on it, and so broke it, and then distributed the bits among the different families to be placed in the granaries and to serve as blessings upon the corn; for they said that without the stone (or its equivalent in hard cash) a blight would fall upon their crops." Squeezes had been previously taken from it by M. Ganneau and Captain Warren, from which the text has been restored.[1]

It records three great events in the reign of Mesha.

(1) Lines 1-21. Wars of Mesha with Omri and his successors.

(2) Lines 21-31. Public works of Mesha after his deliverance from his Jewish oppressors.

(3) Lines 31-34. His successful wars against the

[1] For these particulars, and the following translations, see Dr. Ginsburg in *Records of the Past*, xi. 163; and Dr. Neubauer, *id.*, New Series, ii. 194; *The Moabite Stone*, Second Edition (Reeves & Turner), 1871; Dr. Schlottmann, *Die Sieggessaüle Mesas*, 1870; Nöldeke, *Die Inschrift der König Mesa*, 1870; Stade, i. 534; Kittel, ii. 198, etc.

Edomites (or a people of Horonaim), undertaken by command of his god Chemosh. The date of the erection of the monolith is about B.C. 890.

It begins thus :—

"(1) I, Mesha, am son of Chemosh-Gad,[1] King of Moab, (2) the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab 30 years, and I reigned (3) after my father. And I erected this Stone to Chemosh (a stone of salvation),[2] (4) for he saved me from all despoilers, and let me see my desire upon all my enemies. (5) Now Omri, King of Israel, he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his (6) land. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. In my days he said (Let us go) (7) and I will see my desire on him and his house, and Israel said, I shall destroy it for ever. Now Omri took the land (8) Medeba, and (the enemy) occupied it (in his days and in) the days of his sons, forty years. And Chemosh (had mercy) (9) on it in my days."

He goes on to tell how he built Bael Meon and Kirjathaim ; captured Ataroth, and killed all its warriors, and devoted its spoil to Chemosh. "And Chemosh said to me, Go take Nebo against Israel." He took it, slew seven thousand men, devoted the women and maidens to Ashtar-Chemosh, and offered Jehovah's vessels to Chemosh. Then he took Jahas which the king of Israel had fortified, and annexed it to Dibon ; built Korcha, its palaces, prisons, etc., Aroer, Bethbamoth, and other towns which he colonised with poor Moabites ; and took Horonaim by assault.

[1] Chemosh-Gad perhaps came to the throne in the fourth year of Omri, about B.C. 926, and reigned till the close of Ahaziah's reign (B.C. 896).

[2] Comp. 1 Sam. vii. 12.

There the inscription ends, but not until it has given us some details of a series of bloody wars about which the Scripture narrative is almost entirely silent, though in 2 Kings iii. 4-27 it narrates Mesha's desperate resistance of Israel, Judah, and Edom (B.C. 896).

On this inscription we may briefly remark that for Chemosh-Gad, Dr. Neubauer reads Chemosh-melech, and makes various other changes and suggestions.

2. From the annals of Assyria we learn the altogether unexpected fact that *Ahabu Sirlai, i.e.*, "Ahab of Israel," was acting as one of the allies, or more probably as one of the vassals, of Syria in the great battle fought at Karkar, B.C. 854, against Shalmanezer II., by Hittites, Hamathites, and Syrians. Whether this was before the invasion of Benhadad, or after his defeat, is uncertain.

The twentieth chapter of the Book of Kings tells us that Benhadad, the Aramæan king, accompanied by thirty-two feudatory princes of Hittites, Hamathites, and others, gathered together all his host with his horses and chariots, and proclaimed war against Israel. Unable to meet this vast army in the field, Ahab shut himself up in Samaria, and Benhadad went up and besieged it. We do not know which Benhadad this was. It could not have been the grandson of Rezon, whom, fourteen years earlier, King Asa had bribed to attack Baasha in order to divert him from building Ramah.[1] It may have been his son or grandson bearing the same religious dynastic name. In any case the policy of attacking Israel was suicidal. If the kings had possessed the prescient glance of the prophets they could not have failed to see on the northern horizon the cloud of Assyrian power, which menaced

[1] For it is indirectly mentioned that "*his father*" had taken cities from Omri.

them all with cruel extinction at the hands of that atrocious people. Their true policy would have been to form an offensive and defensive league, instead of coveting one another's dominions. Although Assyria had not yet risen to the zenith of her empire, she was already formidable enough to convince the King of Damascus that he would never be able single-handed to prevent Syria from being crushed before her. Instead of inflicting ruinous losses and humiliations on the tribes of Israel, the dynasty of Rezon, if it had been wise in its day, would have insured their friendly aid against the horrible common enemy of the nations.

When Benhadad had succeeded in reducing Ahab to hopeless straits, he sent him a herald to demand the admission of ambassadors. Their ultimatum was couched in language of the deadliest insult. Benhadad laid insolent claim to everything which Ahab possessed —his silver, his gold, his wives, and the fairest of his children. To save his people from ruin, Ahab—it is strange that throughout the narrative we do not hear one word either about Jezebel or Elijah—sent an answer of the humblest submission. Tyre gave him no help, nor did Judah. He seems at this time to have been entirely isolated and to have sunk to the nadir of his degradation. "It is true," he said, "my lord, and king; I, and all that I possess, is thine." The depth of humiliation involved in such a concession is the measure of the utter straits to which Ahab was reduced. When an Eastern king had to give up to his conqueror even his seraglio—yes, even his queen—all his power must have been humbled to the very dust. And at the head of Ahab's seraglio was Jezebel. How frenzied must have been the thoughts of that terrible woman, when she saw that

her Baal, and the Astarte to whom her father was a priest, in spite of the temple which she had built, and her eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal and Asherah with all their vestments and pompous ceremonies and blood-stained invocations, had wholly failed to save her—a great king's daughter and a great king's wife—from drinking to the very dregs this cup of shame!

Encouraged by this abject demeanour into yet more outrageous insolence, Benhadad sent back his ambassadors with the further menace that he would himself send his messengers next day into Samaria, who should search and rifle not only the palace of Ahab, but the houses of all his servants, from which they should take away everything that was pleasant in their eyes.

The merciless demand kindled in the breast of the wretched king one last spark of the courage of despair. Nothing could be worse than such a pillage. Death itself seemed preferable. He summoned together all the elders of the land to a great council, to which the people also were invited, and he set the state of things before them. The fact gives us an interesting glimpse into the constitution of the kingdom of Israel. It greatly resembled that of the little Greek states in the days of the *Iliad*. Under ordinary circumstances of prosperity the king was within certain limits despotic; but he might easily be reduced to the necessity of consulting a sort of senate (γερουσία), composed of his greatest subjects,[1] and at these open-air deliberations the people were present as assessors on whose will depended the ultimate decision.

Ahab put before his council the desperate condition to which he had been reduced by the Syrian leaguer.

[1] LXX., Exod. iii. 16.

He recounted the cruel terms to which he had submitted in order to save his people from destruction. From the second embassage of Benhadad it was clear that the first demand had only been made in the hope that its refusal would give the Syrians an excuse for pressing on the siege, and delivering the city to ravage and slaughter. Was it their will that the insolent foreign tyrant should have his way, and be permitted without let or hindrance to rifle their houses, and carry away their goodliest sons as eunuchs and their fairest wives as concubines? He asked their advice how to overcome this dire calamity;

> "What reinforcement we may gain from **hope,**
> If not what resolution from despair."

The elders saw that even massacre and pillage could hardly be worse than a tame submission to such demands. They plucked up courage and said to Ahab, "Hearken not to him, nor consent"; and the people shouted their applause to the heroic refusal.[1] The king seems in this instance to have been more despondent than his subjects, perhaps because he was better able than they to gauge the immense military superiority of his invader. Even his second message, though it rejected Benhadad's demand, was almost pusillanimous in its submission. With bated breath and whispering humbleness Ahab said to the Syrian ambassadors, quite in the tone of a vassal: "Tell my lord the king, I *will* submit to his first demands; I *may* not consent to his final ones."

The ambassadors went to Benhadad, and returned with the fierce menace that in the name of his god[2]

[1] Comp. Josh. ix. 18; Judg. xi. 11.

[2] 1 Kings xx. 10. Elohim here, doubtless, means the false gods of Benhadad. Vat. LXX., ὁ Θεός; but Chaldee, "the terrors."

their king would shatter Samaria into dust, of which the handfuls would not suffice for each of his soldiers.[1] Ahab replied firmly in a happy proverb, "Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off."[2]

The warning proverb was reported to the Aramæan king, whilst in the insolent confidence of victory he was drinking himself drunk in his war-booths.[3] It nettled him to fury. "Plant the engines," he exclaimed. The catapults and battering-rams,[4] with all the engines which constituted the siege-train of the day, were at once set in motion, the scaling ladders brought up, and the archers set in position, just as we see in the Assyrian Kouyunjik sculptures of the siege of Lachish and other cities by Sennacherib.[5]

Ahab's heart must have sunk within him, for he knew his impotence, and he knew also the horrors which befell a city taken after desperate resistance. But he was not left unencouraged. The characteristic of the prophets was that dauntless confidence in

[1] "Fanfaronnade, qui veut dire; je réduirai cette bicoque en poussière; j'ai avec moi plus de monde qu'il ne faudra pour l'emporter tout entière" (Reuss). Comp. Herod., viii. 226, where Dieneces answers the braggart vaunt of the Medes.

[2] Reuss renders it, "Ceignant n'est pas encore gaignant." The proverb resembles in different aspects the precept of Solon, *τέρμα ὁρᾶν βιότοιο*, and "Praise a fair day at night"; and the Italian, "Capo ha cosa fatta"; and the Latin, "Ne triumphum canas ante victoriam"; and the French, "Il ne faut pas vendre le peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué."

[3] A.V., "pavilions"; but the word (*sukkoth*) implies that they were temporary booths rather than tents. They resembled the birchwood pavilions made for the Turkish pachas in campaigns (Keil).

[4] A.V., "Set yourselves in array." LXX., *οἰκοδομήσατε χάρακα*; Vulg., *circumdate civitatem.*

[5] Now in the British Museum.

Jehovah which so often made a prophet the Tyrtæus of his native land, unless the land had sunk into utter apostasy. In this extreme of peril a nameless prophet —the Rabbis, who always guess at a name when they can, say it was Micaiah ben Imlah—came to Ahab. As though to emphasise the supernatural character of his communication, he pointed to the chariots and archers and the Syrian host—which, if the subsequent numbers be accurate, must have reached the astounding total of one hundred and thirty thousand men—and said, in the name of Jehovah:—

"Hast thou seen all this great multitude?
Lo! I will deliver it into thine hand to-day:
And thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

"By whom?" was the astonished and half-despairing question of the king; and the strange answer was:—

"By the young servants[1] of the provincial governors."

It was to be made clear that this was a victory due to the intervention of God, and not won by the power nor the might of man, lest the warriors of Israel should be able to boast of the arm of flesh.

"Who shall lead the assault?" asked the king.

"Thou!" answered the prophet.

Nothing could be wiser than this counsel, now that the nation was brought to the extreme edge of hazard. The veterans, perhaps, were intimidated. They would see more clearly the hopelessness of attempting to cope with that colossal host under its five-and-thirty kings. But now the nation, whose veterans had been driven back, evoked the battle-brunt of its youths. The two hundred and thirty-two pages of the district governors were ready to obey orders, ready, like an army of

[1] 1 Kings xx. 14 (נְעָרִים).

Decii to devote their lives to the cause of their country. They were put in the forefront of the battle, and so pitiable was the depression of the capital that Ahab could only number a paltry army of seven thousand soldiers to stand behind their desperate undertaking.[1]

Their plan was well laid. They went out at noon. At that burning hour, under the intolerable glare and heat of the Syrian sun—and campaigns were only undertaken in spring and summer—it is almost impossible to bear the weight of armour, or to sit on horseback, or to endure the fierce heat of iron chariots. The first little army which issued from the gates of Samaria might rely on the effects of a surprise. Thousands of the Syrian soldiers expecting nothing less than a battle would be unarmed, and taking their siesta. Their chariots and war steeds would be unharnessed and unprepared.

Benhadad was still continuing his heavy drinking bout with his vassal princes, and not one of them was in a condition to give coherent commands. A messenger announced to the band of royal drunkards that "men" were come out of Samaria. They were too few to call them "an army," and the notion of an attack from that poor handful seemed ridiculous. Benhadad thought they were coming to sue for peace, but whether peace or war were their object he gave the contemptuous order to "take them alive."

It was easier said than done. Led by the king at the head of his valorous youths the little host clashed into the midst of the unwieldly, unprepared, ill-handled Syrian host, and by their first slaughter created one of those fearful panics which have often been the destruc-

[1] Jarchi—*more Rabbinico*—says that these were the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

tion of Eastern hosts. The Syrians, whose army was made up of heterogeneous forces, and which could not be managed by thirty-four half-intoxicated feudatories of differing interests and insecure allegiance, was doubtless afraid that internal treachery must have been at work. Like the Midianites, like Zerah's Ethiopian host, like the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, like the Ammonites and Moabites in the wilderness of Tekoa, like the army of Sennacherib, like the enormous and motley hosts of Persia at Marathon, at Platæa, and at Arbela, they were instantly flung into irremediable confusion which tended every moment to be more fatal to itself. The little band of the youths and horses of Israel had nothing to do but to slay, and slay, and slay.[1] No effective resistance was even attempted. Long before evening the hundred and thirty thousand Syrians, with the entangled mass of their chariots and horsemen, were in headlong flight, while Ahab and the people of Israel slaughtered their flying rear. The defeat became an absolute rout. Benhadad himself had a most narrow escape. He could not even wait for his war chariot. He had to fly with a few of his horsemen, and apparently, so the words may imply, on an inferior horse.[2]

What effect was produced on the national mind and on the social religion by this immense deliverance we are not told. Never, certainly, had any nation deeper cause for gratitude to its religious teachers, who alone

[1] 1 Kings xx. 20, LXX., *καὶ ἐδευτέρωσεν ἕκαστος τὸν παρ αὐτοῦ.*

[2] Or, "pell-mell." The Hebrew in 1 Kings xx. 20 is, וּפָרָשִׁים עַל־סוּס, "on a horse with (some) horsemen." Klostermann would supply הוּא. Jonathan takes וּפָרָשִׁים as a dual—"and two riders with him"; LXX., *ἐφ' ἵππων ἱππέων*; Vulg., *in equo cum equitibus suis*; Luther, "*sammt Rossen und Reitern.*"

had not despaired of the commonwealth when everything seemed lost. We would fain know where was Elijah at this crisis, and whether he took any part in it. We cannot tell, but we know that as a rule the sons of the prophets acted together under their chiefs, and that individual impulses were rarely encouraged. The very meaning of the "Schools of the Prophets" was that they were all trained to adopt the same principles and to move together as one body.

The service rendered by this prophet, whose very name has been buried in undeserved oblivion, did not end here. Perhaps he saw signs of carelessness and undue exultation. He went again to the king, and warned him that his victory, immense as it had been, was not final. It was no time for him to settle on his lees. The Syrians would assuredly return the following year,[1] probably with increased resources, and with the burning determination to avenge their defeat. Let Ahab look well to his army and his fortresses, and prepare himself for the coming shock!

[1] See 2 Sam. xi. 1. The custom of all countries in the ancient world was to devote the summer months only to campaigns. There were few or no standing armies, and the citizen-conscripts had to look after their farms, or the nation would have starved. The Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians introduced a gradual revolution in these respects.

CHAPTER XLV.

AHAB'S INFATUATION.

1 KINGS xx. 31—43.

"Quem vult Deus perire dementat prius."

THE courtiers of Benhadad found it easy to flatter his pride by furnishing reasons to account for such an alarming overthrow. They had attacked the Israelites on their hills, and the gods of Israel were hill-gods. Next time they would take Israel at a disadvantage by fighting only on the plain. Further, the vassal kings were only an element of dissension and weakness. They prevented the handling of the army as one strong machine worked by a single supreme will. Let Benhadad depose from command these incapable weaklings, and put in their place dependent civil officers (*pachoth*) who would have no thought but to obey orders.[1] And so, with good heart, let the king collect a fresh army with horses and chariots as powerful as the last. The issue would be certain conquest and dear revenge.

Benhadad followed this advice. The next year he went with his new host and encamped near Aphek. There is an Aphek (now Fîk) which lay on the road between Damascus on the east of Jordan on a little plain south-east of the Sea of Galilee. This may have

[1] 1 Kings xx. 24. LXX., σατράπας.

been the town of Issachar, in the valley of Jezreel, where Saul was defeated by the Philistines (1 Sam. xxix. 1). Israel went out to meet them duly provisioned.[1] The Syrian host spread over the whole country; the Israelite army looked only like two little flocks of kids.[2]

To strengthen the misgivings of the anxious king of Israel, another nameless prophet—probably, like Elijah, a Gileadite—came to promise him the victory. Jehovah would convince the Syrians that He was something more than a mere local god of the hills as they had blasphemously said, and Israel would once more be shown that He was indeed the Lord.

For seven days the vast army and the little band of patriots gazed at each other, as the Israelites and Philistines had done in the days of Saul and Goliath. On the seventh day they joined battle. In what special way the aid of Jehovah seconded the desperate valour of His people who were fighting for their all we do not know, but the result was, once more, their stupendous victory. The army of the Syrians was not only defeated, but practically annihilated. In round numbers 100,000 Syrians fell in the slaughter of that day, and when the remnant took refuge in Aphek, which they had captured, they perished in a sudden crash—perhaps of earthquake—which buried them in the ruins of its fortifications.[3] Rescued, we know not

[1] R.V., "and were victualled," not, as in A.V., "and were all present." Alex. LXX., *διωκήθησαν*; Vulg., *acceptis cibariis.*

[2] Why two? No explanation is given. It has been conjectured that Judah had sent a separate contingent to help them in their distress.

[3] Some have supposed that an earthquake occurred, and Canon Rawlinson mentions (*Speaker's Commentary*) that the earthquake of Lisbon is said to have destroyed sixty thousand persons in five minutes.

how, from this disaster, Benhadad fled from chamber to chamber[1] to hide himself from the victors in some innermost recess.

But it was impossible that he should not be discovered, and therefore his servants persuaded him to throw himself on the mercy of his conqueror. "The kings of Israel," they said, "are, as we have heard, compassionate kings; let us go before the king with sackcloth on our loins, and ropes round our necks, and ask if he will save thy life."

So they went, as the burghers of Calais went before Edward I.; and then Ahab heard from the ambassadors of the king who had once dictated terms to him with such infinite contempt, the message: "Thy slave Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live."

The incident that followed is eminently characteristic of Eastern customs. In *rencontres* between Orientals everything depends on the first words which are exchanged. It is believed that superior powers wield the utterances of the tongue amid the chances which are really destiny, so that the most casual expression is caught up superstitiously as a sort of Bath Kol, or "the daughter of a voice," which not only indicates but even helps to bring about the purposes of Heaven. A chance friendly greeting may become the termination of a blood feud, because something more than chance is supposed to lie behind it![2] Once when a group

[1] חֶדֶר בְּחֶדֶר. Comp. for similar phrases,(Heb.) Lev. xxv. 53; Deut. xv. 20; 1 Kings xxii. 25; 2 Chron. xxviii. 26. Klostermann, with one of his amazing conjectures, reads "by the spring Harod in Harod"! LXX., *εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ κοιτῶνος, εἰς τὸ ταμεῖον*; Vulg., *in cubiculum quod erat intra cubiculum.* Josephus makes it a cellar (*εἰς ὑπόγαιον οἶκον ἐκούβη*), "like the modern *serdaubs* in which the inhabitants of many Eastern cities live in the summer" (Rawlinson).

[2] The accidental sigh of the engineer was sufficient to prevent the

of doomed gladiators gathered themselves under the Imperial *podium* of the amphitheatre with their sublimely monotonous chant, "*Ave Cæsar, morituri te salutamus*," the half-dazed emperor inadvertently answered, "*Avete vos!*" "He has bidden us, 'Hail!'" shouted the gladiators: "the contest is remitted; we are free!" Had the Romans been Orientals the twenty thousand assembled spectators would have felt the force of the appeal. Even as it was the significance of the omen was felt to be so great that the gladiators threw down their arms, and it was only by whips and violence that they were finally driven to the combat in which they perished.[1]

So with intense eagerness the ambassadors, in their sackcloth and their halters, awaited the Bath Kol. It came far more favourably than they had dared to hope. Surprised, and perhaps half-touched with pity for so immense a reverse of misfortune, "Is he yet alive?" exclaimed the careless king: "he is my brother!"

The Syrians snatched at the expression as a decisive omen.[2] It constituted an absolute end of the feud. It became an implicit promise of that sacred *dakheel*, that "protection" to which the slightest and most accidental expression constitutes a recognised claim.[3] "Thy *brother* Benhadad," they earnestly and emphatically repeated. In accordance with Eastern custom and augury their whole end was gained. As far as Benhadad was concerned he was now safe; as far as

colossal Egyptian statue of a Pharaoh from being moved to its destination. Even Rome shared the immemorial superstition.

[1] Suet., *Claud.*

[2] xx. 33, יְנַחֲשׁוּ, from נָחַשׁ, "an augury"; LXX., **ἀνελέξαντο τὸν λόγον** (**οἰωνίσαντο**), Vulg., ***quod acceperunt viri pro omine.***

[3] Layard, *Nineveh*, 317-19.

Ahab was concerned, the mischief, if mischief it were, was irreparably done.

Ahab could hardly have drawn back even if he wished to do so, but perhaps he was swayed by a fellow feeling for a king. This strange uxorious monarch, with his easily swayed impulses, his fits of schoolboy sullenness and swift repentance, his want of insight into existing conditions, his—if the expression may be excused—happy-go-lucky way of letting questions settle themselves, was, no doubt, a brave warrior, but he was a most incapable statesman. His conduct was perfectly infatuated. Pity is one thing, but the security of a nation has also to be considered. It would have been a worse than insensate piece of pseudo-chivalry if the Congress of Vienna had not sent Napoleon to Elba, and if England had not confined him in St. Helena. To set free a man endowed with passionate hatred, with immense ambitions, with boundless capacities for mischief—or only to bind him with the packthread of insecure promises—was the conduct of a fool.[1] If it was compassion which induced Ahab to give Benhadad his life, it showed either gross incapacity or treachery against his own nation not to clip his wings, and hamper him from the future injuries which the burden of gratitude was little likely to prevent. The sequel shows that Benhadad's resentment against his royal "brother" only became more hopelessly implacable, and in all probability it was largely mingled with contempt.

And Ahab's conduct, besides being foolish, was guilty. It showed a frivolous non-recognition of his duties as a theocratic king. It flung away the national advan-

[1] The compact is vainly dignified with the name of a בְּרִית, or "covenant."

tages, and even the national security, which had not been vouchsafed to any power or worth of his, but only to Jehovah's direct interposition to save the destinies of his people from premature extinction.

When Benhadad came out of his hiding-place, Ahab, not content with sparing the life of this furious and merciless aggressor, took him up into his chariot, which was the highest honour he could have paid him, and accepted the excessively easy terms which Benhadad himself proposed. The Syrians were not required to pay any indemnity for the immense expenditure and unutterable misery which their wanton invasions had inflicted upon Israel! They simply proposed to restore the cities which Benhadad's father had taken from Omri, and to allow the Israelites to have a protected bazaar in Damascus similar to the one which the Syrians enjoyed in Samaria.[1] On this covenant Benhadad was sent home scatheless, and with a supineness which was not so much magnanimous as fatuous, Ahab neglected to take hostages of any kind to secure the fulfilment even of these ridiculously inadequate terms of peace.

Benhadad was not likely to throw away the chance which gave him such an easy-going and improvident adversary. It is certain that he did not keep the covenant. He probably never even intended to keep it. If he condescended to any excuse for breaking it, he would probably have affected to regard it as extorted by violence, and therefore invalid, as Francis I. defended the forfeiture of his parole after the battle of Pavia. The recklessness with which Ahab had reposed in Benhadad a confidence, not only undeserved, but

[1] חֻצוֹת. Compare the *Lombard* Streets, and the *Jewries* in London and Paris.

rendered reckless by all the antecedents of the Syrian king, cost him very dear. He had to pay the penalty of his dementation three years later in a new and disastrous war, in the loss of his life, and the overthrow of his dynasty. The fact that, after so many exertions, and so much success in war, in commerce, and in worldly policy, he and his house fell unpitied, and no one raised a finger in his defence, was doubtless due in part to the alienation of his army by a carelessness which flung away in a moment all the fruits of their hard-won victories.[1]

There was one aspect in which Ahab's conduct assumed an aspect more supremely culpable. To whom had he owed the courage and inspiration which had rescued him from ruin, and led to the triumphs which had delivered him and his people from the depths of despair? Not in the least to himself, or to Jezebel, or to Baal's priests, or to any of his captains or counsellors. In both instances the heroism had been inspired and the success promised by a prophet of Jehovah. What would convince him, if this would not, that in God only was his strength? Did not the most ordinary gratitude as well as the most ordinary wisdom require that he should recognise the source of these unhoped-for blessings? There is not the least trace that he did so. We read of no word of gratitude to Jehovah, no desire to follow the guidance of the prophets to whom he was so deeply indebted, and who had proved their right to be regarded as interpreters of God's will. Had he done this he would not have suffered the clannishness of royalty to plunge him

[1] Clericus says, rightly: "Factum Ahabi, quamvis clementiæ speciem præ se ferret, non erat veræ clementiæ, quæ non est erga latrones exercenda; qui si dimittantur multo magis nocebunt."

into a step which was the chief cause of his final destruction.

He might ignore guidance, but he could not escape reproof. Again an unknown monitor from the sons of the prophets was commissioned to bring home to him his error. He did so by an acted parable, which gave concrete force and vividness to the lesson which he desired to convey. Speaking "by the word of the Lord"—*i.e.*, as a part of the prophetic inspiration which dictated his acts—he went to one of his fellows in the school of which the members are here first called "the sons of the prophets," and bade him to wound him. His comrade, not unnaturally, shrank from obeying so strange a command. It must be borne in mind that the mere appeal to an inspiration from Jehovah did not always authenticate itself. Over and over again in the prophetic books, and in these histories which the Jews call "the earlier prophets," we find that men could profess to act in Jehovah's name, and even perhaps to be sincere in so doing, who were mere dupes of their own wills and fancies. It was, in fact, possible for them to become false prophets, without always meaning to be so; and these chances of hallucination—of being misled by a lying spirit—led to fierce contentions in the prophetic communities. "Since you have not obeyed Jehovah's voice," said the man, "the lion shall immediately slay you." "And as soon as he was departed from him the lion found him and slew him." There is nothing impossible in the incident, for in those days lions were common in Palestine, and they multiplied when the country had been depopulated by war. But we can never feel certain how far the ethical and didactic and parabolic elements were allowed, for purposes of edification,

to play a part in these ancient yet not contemporaneous *Acta Prophetarum*, and at any rate to dictate the interpretation of things which may have actually occurred.

The prophet then bade another comrade to smite him, and he did so effectually, inflicting a serious wound.[1] This was a part of the intended scene in which the prophet meant for a moment to play the *rôle* of a soldier who had been wounded in the Syrian war. So he bound up his head with a bandage,[2] and waited for the king to pass by. An Eastern king is liable at any time to be appealed to by the humblest of his subjects, and the prophet stopped Ahab and stated his imaginary case. "A captain," he said, "brought me one of his war captives,[3] and ordered me to keep him safe. If I failed to do so, I was to pay the forfeit of my life, or to pay as a fine a silver talent.[4] But as I was looking here and there the captive escaped." "Be it so," answered Ahab; "you are bound by your own bargain." Thus Ahab, like David, was led to condemn himself out of his own mouth. Then the prophet tore the bandage from his face, and said to Ahab: "Thou art the man! Thus saith Jehovah, I entrusted to thee the man under my ban (*cherem*),[5] and thou hast let him escape. Thou

[1] The object and necessity of this for his purpose is by no means apparent. Perhaps it was to figure the wound which Ahab had by his conduct wilfully inflicted on himself or on Israel.

[2] Verse 38. This, and not "with ashes upon his face," is the meaning of the Hebrew אֵפֶר. LXX., τελαμών, "a headband"; Vulg., *aspersione pulveris*; and so, too, Peshito, Aquila, and Symmachus.

[3] 1 Kings xx. 39. שִׁיר in the sense of סַר, according to Ewald's reading.

[4] About £350. Evidently, therefore, the captive is supposed to be a very important person.

[5] אִישׁ חֶרְמִי.

shalt pay the forfeit. Thy life shall go for his life, thy people for his people."

Anger and indignation filled the heart of the king; he went to his house "heavy and displeased." The phrase, twice applied to him and never used of another, shows that he was liable to characteristic moods of overwhelming sullenness, the result of an uneasy conscience, and of a rage which was compelled to remain impotent. It is evident that he did not dare to chastise the audacious offender, though the Jews say that the prophet was Micaiah, the son of Imlah, and that he was imprisoned for this offence.[1] As a rule the prophets—like Samuel and Nathan, and Gad and Shemaiah, and Jehu the son of Hanani—were protected by their sacrosanct position. Now and then an Urijah, a Jeremiah, a Zechariah son of Berechiah, paid the penalty of bold denunciation, not only by hatred and persecution, but with his life. This, however, was the exception. As a rule the prophets felt themselves safe under the wing of a Divine protector. Not only Elijah in his sheepskin mantle, but even the humblest of his imitators in the prophetic schools might fearlessly stride up to a king, seize his steed by the bridle, as Athanasius did to Constantine, and compel him to listen to his rebuke or his appeal.

[1] סַר וְזֹעֵף; Vulg., *indignans, et frendens*, a phrase only used of Ahab (xxi. 4-5). Josephus (*Antt.*, XIII. xv. 5) says that Ahab imprisoned and punished the prophet, whom, with the Rabbis, he identifies with Micaiah.

CHAPTER XLVI.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

1 KINGS xxi. 1—29.

"The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless is but for a moment."—JOB xx. 5.

"If weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness."

Samson Agonistes.

THE chief glory of the institution of prophecy was that it rightly estimated the supremacy of the moral law. The prophets saw that the enforcement of one precept of righteousness involved more true religion than hundreds of pages of Levitic ritual. It is the temptation of priests and Pharisees to sink into formalism; to warp the conceptions of the Almighty into that of a Deity who is jealous about inconceivable pettinesses of ceremonial; to think that the Eternal cares about niceties of rubric, rules of ablutions, varieties of nomenclature or organisation. In their solicitude about these nullities they often forget, as they did in the days of Christ, the weightier matters of the law, mercy, judgment, and truth. When religion has been dwarfed into these inanities the men who deem themselves its only orthodox votaries, and scorn all others as "lax" and "latitudinarian," are not only ready to

persecute every genuine teacher of righteousness, but even to murder the Christ Himself. They come to think that falsehood and cruelty cease to be criminal when practised in the cause of religious intolerance.

Against all such dwarfing perversion of the conceptions of the essential service which man owes to God the prophets were called forth to be in age after age the energetic remonstrants. It is true that they also had their own special temptations; they, too, might become the slaves of shibboleths; they might sink into a sort of automatic or mechanical form of prophecy which contented itself with the wearing of garbs and the repetition of formulæ long after they had become evacuated of their meaning.[1] They might distort the message "Thus saith Jehovah" to serve their own ends.[2] They might yield to the temptations both of individual and of corporate ambition. They might assume the hairy garb and rough locks of Elijah for the sake of the awe they inspired while their heart "was not but for their own covetousness."[3] They might abuse their prestige to promote their own party or their own interests. They were assailed by the same perils to which in after days so many monks, hermits, and religious societies succumbed. Many a man became a nominal prophet, as many a man became a monk, because the office secured to him a maintenance—

> "'Twas not for nothing the good belly-ful,
> The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
> And day long blessed idleness besides;"

[1] Zech. xiii. 4.

[2] On this defection and imposture of prophets, see Jer. xxiii. 21-40. Isa. xxx. 9, 10; Ezek. xiii. 7-9; Micah ii. 11; Deut. xviii. 20.

[3] Jer. xxii. 17.

and also because it surrounded him with a halo of imaginary sanctity. The monks, we know, by their turbulence and partisanship, became the terror of the fourth century after Christ, and no men more emphatically denounce their mendicancy and their impostures than the very fathers who, like St. Jerome and St. Augustine, were most enamoured of their ideal.[1] As for the hermits, if one of them securely established a reputation for abnormal austerities he became in his way as powerful as a king. In the stories even of such a man as St. Martin of Tours[2] we detect now and then a gleam of hauteur, of which traces are not lacking in the stories of these nameless or famous prophets in the Book of Kings.

No human institution, even if it be avowedly religious, is safe from the perilous seductions of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Perpetually

> "The old order changeth, giving place to new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Mendicant brotherhoods and ascetic communities were soon able, by legal fictions, to revel in opulence, to steep themselves in luxury, and yet to wield a religious authority which princes envied. When we read what the Benedictines and the Minorites and the Carthusians often became, we are the less surprised to find that even the Schools of the Prophets, while Elijah and Elisha yet lived, could abdicate as a

[1] *De Gubernat. Dei.*, viii.; Ambrose, *Ep.*, xli.; Cassian, *De Instit. Monastic. passim.* See chap. xvi. of my *Lives of the Fathers* (St. Jerome), and Zöckler, *Gesch. der Askese*, for many authorities.

[2] See my *Lives of the Fathers*, vol. i. (St. Martin of Tours).

body their best functions, and, deceiving and deceived, could learn to answer erring kings according to their idols.

But the greatest and truest prophets rose superior to the influences which tended to debase the vulgar herd of their followers, in days when prophecy grew into an institution and the world became content to side with a church which gave it no trouble and mainly spoke in its own tones. True prophecy cannot be made a matter of education, or "tamed out of its splendid passion." The greatest prophets, like Amos and Isaiah, did not come out of the Schools of the Prophets. Inspiration cannot be cultivated, or trained to grow up a wall. "Much learning," says Heraclitus very profoundly, "does not teach; but the Sibyl with maddening lips, uttering things unbeautified, unperfumed, and unadorned, reaches through myriads of years because of God." The man whom God has summoned forth to speak the true word or do the heroic deed, at the cost of all hatred, or of death itself, has normally to protest not only against priests, but against his fellow-prophets also when they immorally acquiesced in oppression and wrong which custom sanctioned.[1] It was by such true prophets that the Hebrews and through them the world were taught the ideal of righteousness. Their greatest service was to uphold against idolatry, formalism, and worldliness, the simple standard of the moral law.

It was owing to such teaching that the Israelites formed a true judgment of Ahab's culpability. The act which was held to have outweighed all his other crimes, and to have precipitated his final doom, was

[1] See Jer. xxiii. 20-40.

an isolated act of high-handed injustice to an ordinary citizen.

Ahab was a builder. He had built cities and palaces, and was specially attached to his palace at Jezreel, which he wished to make the most delightful of summer residences. It was unique in its splendour as the first palace inlaid with ivory. The nation had heard of Solomon's ivory throne, but never till this time of an "ivory palace." But a palace is nothing without pleasant gardens. The neighbourhood of Jezreel, as is still shown by the ancient winepresses cut out of the rock in the neighbourhood of its ruins, was enriched by vineyards, and one of these vineyards adjoining the palace belonged to a citizen named Naboth.[1] It happened that no other ground would so well have served the purpose of Ahab to make a garden near his palace, and he made Naboth a fair offer for it. "I will give you," he said, "a better vineyard for it, or I will pay you its full value in ingots of silver."[2]

Naboth, however, was perfectly within his rights[3] in rejecting the offer. It was the inheritance of his fathers, and considerations nothing short of sacred—considerations which then or afterwards found a place in the

[1] The Alex. LXX. throughout calls Naboth "an Israelite," not "a Jezreelite."

[2] Both the Hebrew text of 1 Kings xxi. 1 and Josephus (*Antt.*, XIII. xv. 6) locate the vineyard of Naboth at Jezreel. The LXX., however, place it apparently near the threshing-floor of Ahab in Samaria (παρὰ τῇ ἅλῳ Ἀχαὰβ βασιλέως Σαμαρείας), which is the same as the "void place" of 1 Kings xxii. 10. At both cities Ahab's palace was on the city wall, and on either supposition Naboth's vineyard was close by the palace.

[3] Lev. xxv. 23, "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is Mine." Numb. xxxvi. 7; Ezek. xlvi. 18.

written statutes of the nation—made it wrong in his judgment to sell it. He sturdily refused the offer of the king. His case was different from that of the Jebusite prince Araunah, who had sold his threshing-floor to David, and that of Shemer, who sold the Hill of Samaria to Omri.[1]

A sensible man would have accepted the inevitable, and done the best he could to find a garden elsewhere. But Ahab, who could not bear to be thwarted, came into his house "heavy and displeased." Like an overgrown, sullen boy he flung himself on his divan, turned his face to the wall, and would not eat.

News came to Jezebel in her seraglio of her lord's ill-humour, and she came to ask him, "What mutiny in his spirit made him decline to take food?"[2]

He told her the sturdy refusal of Naboth, and she broke into a scornful laugh. "Are you King of Israel?" she asked. "Why this is playing at kinghood![3] It is not the way we do things in Tyre. Arise, eat bread, be merry. *I* will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Did he admire the mannish spirit of the Syrian princess, or did he secretly shrink from it? At any rate he let Jezebel take her own course. With intrepid insolence she at once wrote a letter in Ahab's name from Samaria, and sent it sealed with his signet to the elders of Jezreel.[4] She ordered them to proclaim a

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[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 24; 1 Kings xvi. 24.

[2] The word rendered "sad" is rendered "mutinous" by Thenius.

[3] LXX., 1 Kings xxi. 7, Σὺ νῦν οὕτως ποιεῖς βασιλέα ἐπὶ Ισραήλ;

[4] The signet was carved with the king's name. Rawlinson aptly compares Lady Macbeth's "Infirm of purpose give me the daggers!"

fast as though to avert some public calamity, and—with a touch of dreadful malice as though to aggravate the horror of his ruin—to exalt Naboth to a conspicuous position in the assembly.[1] They were to get hold of two "sons of worthlessness," professional perjurers, and to accuse Naboth of blasphemy against God and the king.[2] His mode of refusing the vineyard might give some colourable pretext to the charge. On the testimony of those two false witnesses Naboth must be condemned, and then they must drag him outside the city to the pool or tank with his sons and stone them all.

Everything was done by the subservient elders of Jezreel exactly as she had directed. Their fawning readiness to carry out her vile commands is the deadliest incidental proof of the corruption which she and her crew of alien idolaters had wrought in Israel. On that very evening Jezebel received the message, "Naboth is stoned and is dead." By the savage law of those days his innocent sons were involved in his overthrow,[3] and his property, left without heirs, reverted by confiscation to the crown.[4] "Arise," said the triumphant sorceress, "and take possession of the vineyard you

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[1] Josephus calls it an ἐκκλησία. "Set Naboth on high" (Heb.) "at the head of the people"; LXX., ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ λαοῦ; Vulg., *inter primos populi*.

[2] The charge was that "he cursed God and the king." LXX. (by euphemism), εὐλόγησε; Vulg., *Benedixit*. The Hebrew word has both meanings (comp. Exod. xxii. 28, where some would render *Elohim* not "God," but "the judges." See marg. of R.V.). Stoning was the punishment of blasphemy (Lev. xxiv. 16), and took place outside the city (Acts vii. 58).

[3] 2 Kings ix. 26.

[4] 2 Sam. xvi. 4.

wished for. I have given it to you as I promised. Its owner and his sons have died the deaths of blasphemers, and lie crushed under the stones outside Jezreel."

Caring only for the gratification of his wish, heedless of the means employed, hastily and joyously at early dawn the king arose to seize the coveted vineyard. The dark deed had been done at night, the king was alert with the morning light.[1] He rode in his chariot from Samaria to Jezreel, which is but seven miles distant, and he rode in something of military state, for in separate chariots, or else riding in the same chariot, behind him were two war-like youths, Jehu and Bidkar, who were destined to remember the events of that day, and to refer to them four years afterwards, when one had become king and the other his chief commander.[2]

But the king's joy was shortlived!

News of the black crime had come to Elijah, probably in his lonely retreat in some cave at Carmel. He was a man who, though he flamed out on great occasions like a meteor portending ruin to the guilty, yet lived in general a hidden life. Six years had elapsed since the calling of Elisha, and we have not once been reminded of his existence. But now he was instantly inspired to protest against the atrocious act of robbery and oppression, and to denounce upon it an awful retribution which not even Baal-worship had called forth.

[1] In 1 Kings xxi. 16 the LXX. curiously says, that "when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead he rent his garments, and clothed himself in sackcloth; and after this he also arose," etc. This mourning for the *means* but acceptance of the *fact* would not be in disaccord with Ahab's moral weakness.

[2] 2 Kings ix. 25, 36.

Ahab was at the summit of his hopes. He was about to complete his summer palace and to grasp the fruits of the crime which he had allowed the *ἀνδρόβουλον κεὰρ* of his wife to commit. But at the gate of Naboth's vineyard stood the swart figure of the Prophet in his hairy garb. We can imagine the revulsion of feeling which drove the blood to the king's heart as he instantly felt that he had sinned in vain. The advantage of his crime was snatched from him at the instant of fruition. Half in anger, half in anguish, he cried, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"I have found thee," said the Prophet, speaking in Jehovah's name. "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil before me, and I will requite it and extinguish thee before me Surely the Lord saw yesternight the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons.[1] Thy dynasty shall be cut off to the last man, like that of Jeroboam, like that of Baasha. Where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs shall lick thine. The harlots shall wash themselves in the water which thy blood has stained. Him that dieth of thee in the city the dogs shall eat, and him that dieth in the field shall the vultures rend, and the dogs shall eat Jezebel also in the moat of Jezreel."[2]

It is the duty of prophets to stand before kings and not be ashamed. So had Abraham stood before Nimrod, and Moses before Pharaoh, and Samuel before Saul, and Nathan before David, and Iddo before Jeroboam. So was Isaiah to stand hereafter before Ahaz, and Jeremiah before Jehoiachin, and John the Baptist

[1] LXX.

[2] 2 Kings ix. 36. LXX., *ἐν τῷ προτειχίσματι.* The חֵלְקַת of an Eastern city is the desert space outside the walls where the "pariah dogs prowl on the mounds."

before Herod, and Paul before Nero. Nor has it been at all otherwise in modern days. So did St. Ignatius confront Trajan, and St. Ambrose brave the Empress Justina, and St. Martin the Usurper Maximus, and St. Chrysostom the fierce Eudoxia, and St. Basil the heretic Valens, and St. Columban the savage Thierry, and St. Dunstan our half-barbarous Edgar. So, too, in later days, Savonarola could speak the bare bold truth to Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Knox to Mary Queen of Scots, and Bishop Ken to Charles II. But never was any king confronted by so awful a denunciation of doom. Probably the moment that Elijah had uttered it he disappeared; but could not a swift arrow have reached him from Jehu's or Bidkar's bow? We know how they remembered two reigns later the thunder of those awful words, but they would hardly have disobeyed the mandate of their king had he bidden them to seize or slay the Prophet. Nothing was further from their thoughts. Elijah had become to Ahab the incarnation of his own awakened conscience, and it spoke to him in the thunders of Sinai. He quailed before the tremendous imprecation. We may well doubt whether he even so much as entered again the vineyard of Naboth; never certainly could he have enjoyed it. He had indeed sold himself to do evil, and, as always happens to such colossal criminals, he had sold himself for naught—as Achan did for a buried robe and a useless ingot, and Judas for the thirty pieces of silver which he could only dash down on the Temple floor. Ahab turned away from the vineyard, which might well seem to him haunted by the ghosts of his murdered victims and its clusters full of blood. He rent his clothes, and clad himself in sackcloth, and slept in sackcloth, and went about bare-

footed with slow steps[1] and bent brow, a stricken man. Thenceforward as long as he lived he kept in penitence and humiliation the anniversary of Naboth's death,[2] as James IV. of Scotland kept the anniversary of the death of the father against whom he had rebelled.

This penitence, though it does not seem to have been lasting, was not wholly in vain. Elijah received a Divine intimation that, because the king troubled himself, the threatened evil should in part be postponed to the days of his sons. The sun of the unfortunate and miserable dynasty set in blood. But though it is recorded that, incited by his Tyrian wife, he did very abominably in worshipping "idol-blocks," and following the ways of the old Canaanite inhabitants of the land, none of his crimes left a deeper brand upon his memory than the judicial seizure of the vineyard which he had coveted and the judicial murder of Naboth and his sons.

How adamantine, how irreversible is the law of retribution! With what normal and natural development, apart from every arbitrary infliction, is the irrevocable prophecy fulfilled: "Be sure your sin will find you out."

"Yea, he loved cursing, and it came unto him;
Yea, he delighted not in blessing, and it is far from him;
Yea, he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment,
And it came into his bowels like water, like oil into his bones."[3]

Ahab had to be taught by adversity since he refused the lesson of prosperity.

"Daughter of Jove, relentless power,
Thou tamer of the human breast,

[1] יָחֵף. LXX., κλαίων; Josephus, Chaldee, and Peshito, "shoeless."

[2] 1 Kings xxi. 27. καὶ περιεβάλετο σάκκον ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἣ ἐτάραξε Ναβουθαί.

[3] Psalm cix. 17, 18.

Whose iron scourge and torturing hour
The bad affright, afflict the best,
Bound in thine adamantine chain
The proud are taught to taste of pain,
And purple tyrants vainly groan
With woes unfelt before, unpitied and alone."

But as for Elijah himself, he once more vanished into the solitude of his own life, and we do not hear of him again till four years later, when he sent to Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, the message of his doom.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ALONE AGAINST THE WORLD.

1 KINGS xxii. 1—40.

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. I have heard what the prophets said, who prophesied lies in My name."—JER. xxiii. 21-25.

"Μάντι κακῶν οὔ πώποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγυον εἶπας
Αἰεί τοι τὰ κάκ' ἐστὶ φίλα φρεσὶ μαντεύεσθαι
Ἔσθλὸν δ' οὔδε τί πω εἶπας ἔπος οὐδ' ἐτέλεσσας."
HOM., *Iliad*, i. 106.

WE now come to the last scene of Ahab's troubled and eventful life. His two immense victories over the Syrians had secured for his harassed kingdom three years of peace, but at the end of that time he began to be convinced that the insecure conditions upon which he had weakly set Benhadad free would never be ratified. The town of Ramoth in Gilead, which was one of great importance as a frontier town of Israel, had, in express defiance of the covenant, been retained by the Syrians, who still refused to give it up. A favourable opportunity, he thought, had now occurred to demand its cession.

This was the friendly visit of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah. It was the first time that a king of Judah had visited the capital of the kings who had revolted from the dynasty of David. It was the first acknowledged

close of the old blood-feuds, and the beginning of a friendship and affinity which policy seemed to dictate. After all Ephraim and Judah were brothers, though Ephraim had vexed Judah, and Judah hated Ephraim. Jehoshaphat was rich, prosperous, successful in war. No king since Solomon had attained to anything like his greatness—the reward, it was believed, of his piety and faithfulness. Ahab, too, had proved himself a successful warrior, and the valour of Israel's hosts had, with Jehovah's blessing, extricated their afflicted land from the terrible aggressions of Syria. But how could the little kingdom of Israel hope to hold out against Syria, and to keep Moab in subjection? How could the still smaller and weaker kingdom of Judah keep itself from vassalage to Egypt and from the encroachments of Philistines on the west and Moabites on the east? Could anything but ruin be imminent, if these two nations of Israel and Judah—one in land, one in blood, one in language, in tradition, and in interests—were perpetually to destroy each other with internecine strife? The kings determined to make a league with one another, and to bind it by mutual affinity. It was proposed that Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, should marry Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat.

The dates are uncertain, but it was probably in connexion with the marriage contract that Jehoshaphat now paid a ceremonial visit to Ahab. The King of Israel received him with splendid entertainments to all the people.[1] Ahab had already broached to his captains the subject of recovering Ramoth Gilead, and he now took occasion of the King of Judah's visit to invite his co-operation. What advantages and compensations he offered are not stated. It may have been enough

[1] 2 Chron. xviii. 2.

to point out that, if Syria once succeeded in crushing Israel, the fate of Judah would not be long postponed. Jehoshaphat, who seems to have been too ready to yield to pressure, answered in a sort of set phrase: "I am as thou art; my people as thy people; my horses as thy horses."[1]

But it is probable that his heart misgave him. He was a truly pious king. He had swept the Asherahs out of Judah, and endeavoured to train his people in the principles of righteousness and the worship of Jehovah. In joining Ahab there must have been in his conscience some unformulated murmur of the reproof which on his return to Jerusalem was addressed to him by Jehu, the son of Hanani, "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord." But at the beginning of a momentous undertaking he would not be likely to imitate the godless indifference which had led Ahab to take the most fatal steps without seeking the guidance of God. He therefore said to Ahab, "Inquire, I pray thee, of the word of the Lord to-day."

Ahab could not refuse, and apparently the professional prophets of the schools had been pretty well cajoled or drilled into accordance with his wishes. A great and solemn assembly was summoned. The kings had clothed themselves in their royal robes striped with laticlaves of Tyrian purple,[2] and sat on thrones in an open space before the gate of Samaria. No less than four hundred prophets of Jehovah were summoned to prophesy before them. Ahab propounded for their decision the formal and important question, "Shall I go up to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?"

[1] 2 Kings iii. 7. [2] 1 Kings xxii. 10 (Peshito).

With one voice the prophets "philippised." They answered the king according to his idols. Had the gold of Ahab or of Jezebel been at work among them? Had they been in king's houses, and succumbed to courtly influences? Or were they carried away by the interested enthusiasm of one or two of their leaders who saw their own account in the matter? Certain it is that on this occasion they became false prophets. They used their formula "Thus saith Jehovah" without authority, and promised Jehovah's aid in vain.[1] Conspicuous in his evil ardour was one of them named Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah. To illustrate and emphasise his jubilant prophecies he had made and affixed to his head a pair of iron horns; and as though to symbolise the bull of the House of Ephraim, he said to Ahab, "Thus saith Jehovah. With these shalt thou push the Assyrians until thou have consumed them."[2] And all the prophets prophesied so.

What could be more encouraging? Here was a patriot-king, the hero-victor in great battles, bound by fresh ties of kinship and league with the pious descendant of David, meditating a just raid against a dangerous enemy to recover a frontier-fortress which was his by right; and here were four hundred prophets—not Asherah-prophets or Baal-prophets, but genuine prophets of Jehovah—unanimous, and even enthusiastic, in approving his design and promising him

[1] The LXX. has, "The Lord shall deliver into thy hands *even the king of Syria*." At first they all said, "*Adonai* shall deliver it"; but afterwards, perhaps stung by the doubts of Jehoshaphat, or encouraged by the audacity of Zedekiah, they said, "*Jehovah* shall deliver it."

[2] Deut. xxxiii. 17. "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people altogether to the ends of the earth."

the victory! The Church and the world were—as they so often have been—delightfully at one.

"One with God" is the better majority. These loud-voiced majorities and unanimities are rarely to be trusted. Truth and righteousness are far more often to be found in the causes which they denounce and at which they sneer. They silence opposition, but they produce no conviction. They can torture, but they cannot refute. There is something unmistakable in the accent of sincerity, and it was lacking in the voice of these prophets on the popular side. If Ahab was deceived and even carried away by the unwonted approval of so many messengers of Jehovah, Jehoshaphat was not. These four hundred prophets who seemed superfluously sufficient to Ahab by no means satisfied the King of Judah.

"Is there not," he asked, with uneasy misgiving, "one prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?"

One prophet of the Lord besides?[1] Were not, then, *four hundred* prophets of the Lord enough? They must have felt themselves cruelly slighted when they heard the pious king's inquiry, and doubtless a murmur of disapproval arose amongst them.

And the King of Israel said, "There is yet one man." Had Jehoshaphat been secretly thinking of Elijah? Where was Elijah? He was living, certainly, for he survived even into the reign (apparently) of Jehoram. But where was Elijah? If Jehoshaphat had thought of him, Ahab at any rate did not care to mention him. Perhaps he was inaccessible, in some lonely unknown

[1] The LXX., omitting "besides," implies Jehoshaphat's opinion that these were not true prophets of Jehovah. So, too, the Vulg., "Non est hic *propheta Domini quispiam*?"

retreat of Carmel or of Gilead. Since his fearful message to Ahab he had not been heard of; but why did he not appear at a national crisis so tremendous as this?

"There is yet one man," said Ahab. "Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but"—such was the king's most singular comment—"I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."[1]

It was a weak confession that he was aware of one man who was indisputably a true prophet of Jehovah, but whom he had purposely excluded from this gathering because he knew that his was an undaunted spirit which would not consent to shout with the many in favour of the king. Indeed, it seems probable that he was, at this moment, in prison. Jewish legend says that he had been put there because he was the prophet who had reproved Ahab for his folly in suffering Benhadad to escape with the mere breath of a general promise. Till then he had been unknown. He was not like Elijah, and might safely be suppressed. And Ahab, as was universally the case in ancient days, thought that the prophet could practically prophesy as he liked, and not merely prophesy, but bring about his own vaticinations. Hence, if a prophet said anything which he disliked, he regarded him as a personal enemy, and, if he dared, he punished him—just as Agamemnon punished Calchas.

Jehoshaphat, however, was still dissatisfied; he wanted further confirmation. "Let not the king say so," he said. If he is a genuine prophet, the king should not hate him, or fancy that he prophesies evil

[1] Compare Agamemnon's bitter complaint of Calchas.

out of malice prepense. Would it not be more satisfactory to hear what he might have to say?

However reluctantly, Ahah saw that he should have to send for Micaiah, and he despatched a eunuch to hurry him to the scene with all speed.[1]

The mention of a eunuch as the messenger is significant. Ahab had become the first polygamist among the kings of Israel, and a seraglio so large as his[2] could never be maintained without the presence of these degraded and odious officials, who here first appear in the hardier annals of the Northern Kingdom.

This eunuch, however, seems to have had a kindly disposition. He was good-naturedly anxious that Micaiah should not get into trouble. He advised him, with prudential regard for his own interest, to swim with the stream. "See now," he said, "all the prophets with one mouth are prophesying good to the king. Pray agree with them. Do not spoil everything."

How often has the same base advice been given! How often has it been followed! How certain is its rejection to lead to bitter animosity! One of the most difficult lessons of life is to learn to stand alone when all the prophets are prophesying falsely to please the rulers of the world. Micaiah rose superior to the eunuch's temptation. "By Jehovah," he said, "I will speak only what He bids me speak."

He stood before the kings, the eager multitude, the unanimous and passionate prophets; and there was deep silence when Ahab put to him the question to which the four hundred had already shouted an affirmative.

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[1] 1 Kings xxii. 9. LXX., εὐνοῦχον ἕνα. And this is probably the meaning of סָרִיס, not "officer," as in A.V.

[2] For he had seventy sons, besides daughters (2 Kings x. 7)

His answer was precisely the same as theirs: "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king!" Every one must have been astonished. But Ahab detected the tone of scorn which rang through the assenting words, and angrily adjured Micaiah to give a true answer in Jehovah's name. "How many times," he cried, "shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in Jehovah's name." The "how many times" shows how faithfully Micaiah must have fulfilled his duty of speaking messages of God to his erring king.

So adjured, Micaiah could not be silent, however much the answer might cost him, or however useless it might be.

"I saw all Israel,"[1] he said, "scattered on the mountain like sheep without a shepherd. And Jehovah said, These have no master, let every man return to his house in peace."

The vision seemed to hint at the death of the king, and Ahab turned triumphantly to his ally, "Did I not tell you that he would prophesy evil?"

Micaiah justified himself by a daringly anthropomorphic apologue which startles us, but would not at all have startled those who regarded everything as coming from the immediate action of God, and who could ask, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"[2] The prophets were self-deceived,

[1] The words implied that the king would fall, though the army would escape (1 Kings xxii. 17, בְּשָׁלוֹם). Comp. Numb. xxvii. 16, 17 "Let the Lord . set a man over the congregation, who may lead them out and in; that the *congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.*"

[2] Theodoret explains it as anthropomorphism, and condescension to human modes of speech (*προσωποποιΐα τίς ἐστι διδάσκουσα τὴν θείαν συγχώρησιν*).

but this would be expressed by saying that Jehovah deceived them. Pharaoh hardens his heart, and God is said to have done it.

He had seen Jehovah on His throne, he said, surrounded by the host of heaven, and asking who would entice Ahab to his fall at Ramoth Gilead. After various answers the spirit[1] said, "I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets, and will entice him." Then Jehovah sent him, so that they all spoke good to the king though Jehovah had spoken evil. God had sent to them all—king, people, prophets—strong delusion that they should believe a lie.

This stern reproof to all the prophets was more than their coryphæus Zedekiah could endure. Having recourse to "the syllogism of violence" he strode up to Micaiah and smote the defenceless, isolated, hated man on the cheek,[2] with the contemptuous question, "Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me, to speak unto thee?"

"Behold thou shalt know," was the answer, "on the day when thou shalt flee from chamber to chamber to hide thyself." If the hands of the prophet were bound as he came from the prison, there would have been an infinite dignity in that calm rebuke.

But as though the case was self-evident, and Micaiah's opposition to the four hundred prophets proved his guilt, Ahab sent him back to prison. "Issue orders," he said, "to Amon, governor of the city, and Joash, the

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 21. It is "the," not "a" spirit, *i.e.*, the unclean spirit of deception (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης, 1 John iv. 6). Comp. Zech. xiii. 2, "Also I will cause *the prophets and the unclean spirit* to pass out of the land." St. Paul says in 2 Thess. ii. 11: "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie."

[2] The worst of insults (Job xvi. 10; Lam. iii. 30).

king's son, to feed him scantily on bread and water till the king's return in peace."

"If thou return at all in peace," said Micaiah, "Jehovah hath not spoken by me."[1]

It is a sign of the extreme fragmentariness of the narrative that of Micaiah and Zedekiah we hear nothing further, though the sequel respecting them must have been told in the original record. But the prophecy of Micaiah came true, and the unanimous four hundred had prophesied lies. There are times when "the Catholic Church" dwindles down to the one man and the small handful of those who speak the truth. The expedition was altogether disastrous. Ahab, perhaps knowing by spies how bitterly the Syrians were incensed against him, told Jehoshaphat that he would disguise himself and go into the battle, but begged his ally to wear his robes as was usual with kings.[2] Ben-hadad, with the implacable hatred of one who had received a benefit, was so eager to be avenged on Ahab that he had told his thirty-two captains to make his capture their special aim.[3] Seeing a king in his robes they made a fierce onset on Jehoshaphat and surrounded his chariot. His cries for rescue showed them that he was not Ahab, and they turned away.[4] But Ahab's

[1] The words (verse 28) "And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you," are believed by Nöldeke, Klostermann, and others to be an interpolation from Micah i. 2, by some one who confused Micaiah with Micah. They are omitted in the LXX.

[2] We have no reason to accuse Ahab of any bad or selfish motives here. No doubt Micaiah's prophecy of his approaching death had made him anxious. If the LXX. reading, "but put thou on *my* robes," were right, the case would be different.

[3] We see in this order a trace of the single combats which mark the Homeric battles.

[4] 2 Chron. xviii. 31: "And the Lord helped him, and God moved them from him."

disguise did not save him. A Syrian—the Jews say that it was Naaman[1]—drew a bow with no particular aim,[2] and the arrow smote Ahab in the place between the upper and lower armour.[3] Feeling that the wound was deadly he ordered his charioteer to turn his hands and drive him out of the increasing roar of the *mêlée*. But he would not wholly leave the fight, and with heroic fortitude remained standing in his chariot in spite of agony. All day the blood kept flowing down into the hollow of the chariot. At evening the Syrians had to retire in defeat, but Ahab died. The news of the king's death was proclaimed at sunset by the herald, and the cry was raised which bade the host disband and return home.[4]

They carried the king's body back to Samaria, and they buried it. They washed the blood-stained chariot in the pool outside the city, and there the dogs licked the king's blood, and the harlot-votaries of Asherah bathed in the blood-dyed waters, as Elijah had prophesied.[5]

So ended the reign of a king who built cities and ivory palaces,[6] and fought like a hero against the foes of his country, but who had never known how to rule his own house. He had winked at the atrocities committed in his name by his Tyrian queen, had connived at her idolatrous innovations, and put no obstacle in

[1] So Jarchi. Josephus calls him Aman.

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 34. "At a venture"; marg., "in his simplicity"; comp. 2 Sam. xv. 11.

[3] What the French call *le défaut de la cuirasse* (Keil). Luther has, *zwischen den Panzer und Hengel.*

[4] Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. xv. 6.

[5] Köster thinks that there may be reference to the fact that the name "dog" was given to the unchaste.

[6] Amos iii. 15; Psalm xlv. 8; Hom., *Od.*, iv. 72.

the way of her persecutions. The people who might have forgotten or condoned all else never forgot the stoning and spoliation of Naboth and his sons, and his death was regarded as a retribution on this crime.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CONCLUSION.

IT will have been seen that there are two main heroes of the First Book of Kings—Solomon and Elijah. How vast is the gulf which separates those two ideals! In Solomon we see man in all the adventitious splendour which he can derive from magnificent surroundings and from exaltation to a dizzy height above his fellows. Everything that the earth can give him he possesses from earliest youth, yet all turns to dust and ashes under his touch. Wealth, rank, power, splendour cannot ever, or under any circumstances, satisfy the soul. The soul can only be sustained by heavenly food, by the manna which God sends it from heaven in the wilderness. Its divineness can only be maintained by feeding on the Divine. If we think of Solomon, even in his most dazzling hour, we see no element of happiness or of reality in his lonely splendour or loveless home. It is nothing but a miserable pageant. The Book of Ecclesiastes, though written centuries after he had passed away, yet shows sufficiently, as the Eastern legends also show, that mankind was not misled by the glamour which surrounded him into the supposition that he was to be envied. It was felt, whether he uttered it or not, that "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is the real

echo of his weariness. In the famous fiction the Khaliph sees him with the other giant shades on his golden throne at the banquet; but each and all have on their faces an expression of solemn agony, and under the folds of their purple a little flame is ever burning at their hearts.

How different is the rough Prophet of Gilead, the ascetic, in his sheepskin mantle and leathern girdle, who can live for months on a little water and meal baked with oil![1] In him we see the grandeur of manhood reduced to its simplest elements; we see the dignity of man as simply man towering over all the adventitious circumstance of royalty. One who, like Elijah, has no earthly desires, has no real fears. If he flies from Jezebel to save his life, it is only because he is not justified in flinging it away; otherwise he is as dauntless before the *vultus instantis tyranni* as before the *civium ardor prava jubentium*. Hence, Elijah in his absolute poverty, in his despised isolation —Elijah, hunted and persecuted, and living in dens and caves of the earth—is immeasurably greater than Solomon, because he is the messenger of the living God before whom he stands. And his work is immeasurably more permanent and more valuable for humanity than that of all the kings and great men among whom he moved. He believed in God, he fought for righteousness, and therefore he left behind him an unperishable memorial, showing that he who would live for eternity rather than for time is he who best achieves the high

[1] It is supposed that Mohammed alludes to Elijah in the Qur'an, *Sura* xxi. 85: "And Ishmael, and Idris, and *Dhu'l Kifl* ("he of the portion")—all these were of the patient; and we made them enter into our mercy; verily they were among the righteous" (Palmer's Qur'an, ii. 53).

ends of his destiny. He may err as Elijah erred, but with the blessing of the Lord he shall not miscarry. Though he go forth weeping, he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him. Solomon, after his death, almost vanished from the history of Israel into the legends of Arabia. In the New Testament he is but barely mentioned. But Elijah still lives in, and haunts, the memory of his nation. A chair is placed for his invisible presence at every circumcision. A cup is set aside for him at sacred banquets, and all dubious questions are postponed for solution "until the day when Elijah comes." He shone with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration; and St. James, the Lord's brother, appeals to him as the most striking example of the power of that prayer which

"Moves the arm of Him who moves the world."

NOTE ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS.

I HAVE not thought it worth while to trouble the reader with conjectures or corrections of the text, intended to remove the numerous and obvious discrepancies which the redactor of the Book of Kings leaves uncorrected in his references to the synchronism of the reigns.[1] Many of them are removed or modified when we bear in mind that, *e.g.*, Nadab and Elah and Ahaziah are described as reigning "two years" each (xv. 25, xvi. 8, xxii. 51), whereas the reign of each may not have exceeded a year, or even a few months, if these months came at the end of one year and the beginning of another. Periods of anarchic interregnum, or of association of a son with his father on the throne, may account for other confusions and contradictions; but they are purely conjectural, and in some cases far from probable. Jerome, as is well known, gave up all attempts to harmonise the chronologic data as a hopeless problem. "Relege," he says, "omnes et veteris et novi Testamenti libros, et tantam annorum reperies dissonantiam *ut hujuscemodi hærere quæstionibus non tam studiosi quan otiosi hominis esse videatur.*"

The Assyrians were, for the most part (though, as Schrader shows, not *always*), as scrupulously exact in

[1] See W. Robertson Smith, *Journ. of Philology*, x. 20.

their chronological details as the Jews were careless in theirs. The cuneiform inscriptions give us the following data, which may be regarded as *points de repère*, and which are not reconcilable with the received dates :—

	B.C.
Battle of Karkar, in which Ahab and Ben-hadad were defeated	854
Jehu pays tribute to Shalmanezer II.	842
Menahem tributary to Assyria	738
Fall of Samaria	722
Sennacherib's Invasion	701

These dates do not accord with those which we should derive from the Book of Kings in the ordinary system of chronology, which seem to fix the Fall of Samaria in 737.

The dates of the later Kings of Assyria seem to be as follows :—

	B.C.
Rimmon-Nirari III.	810
Shalmanezer III.	781
Assur-dân IV.	771
Tiglath-Pileser III. (Pul, a usurper)	745
Shalmanezer IV.	727
Sargon	722
Sennacherib	705
Esar-haddon I.	681
Assur-bani-pal	668
* * * * * *	
Destruction of Nineveh	606

Adding up the separate data of this book for the kings of Israel we have from Jeroboam to the death of Joram ninety-eight years seven days; and for the same period of the kings of Judah from Rehoboam to Ahaziah we have ninety-five years. Supposing that some such

errors as we have indicated have crept into the computation, the dates of the reigns may be, as reckoned by Kittel :—

	B.C.
Saul	1037-1017
David	1017-977
Solomon	977-937
Jeroboam I.	937-915
Nadab	915-914
Baasha	914-890
Elah	890-889
Zimri	889
Omri	889-877
Ahab	877-855
Ahaziah	855-854
Jehoram	854-842
Rehoboam	937-920
Abijah	920-917
Asa	917-876
Jehoshaphat	876-851
Joram	851-843
Ahaziah	843-842

From Phœnician inscriptions (recorded in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*) little of *historical* importance has hitherto been reaped.

In the Egyptian monuments there is nothing which illustrates the period of the Kings except the inscription of Sheshonk recording his invasion in the days of Rehoboam, of which I have given some account (p. 315).

The Assyrian inscriptions, to which allusion is made in their place, are of extreme importance and interest, and from the lists of kings we have good details of chronology. The best book on their bearing upon

Hebrew history is that of Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und d. Alte Testament*, 1883.

On the datum of four hundred and eighty years from the Exodus to the building of the Temple, I have already touched. It does not agree with Acts xiii. 20, nor with the Book of Judges. The LXX. reads "four hundred and forty." It is almost certainly a late and erroneous chronological gloss derived in very simple fashion, thus: —The wanderings forty years, Joshua forty years, Othniel forty years, Ehud eighty years, Jabin twenty years, Barak forty years, Gideon forty years, the Philistines forty years, Samson twenty years, Samuel forty years, Saul forty years, David forty years = four hundred and eighty, or twelve generations of forty years.

But the same result was arrived at with equal empiricism by omitting the episodes of heathen dominations (Jabin and the Philistines), and only adding up the years assigned to the Judges, and the four years of Solomon's reign before he began to build the Temple, thus:—Othniel forty years, Ehud eighty years, Barak forty years, Gideon forty years, Tola twenty-three years, Jair twenty-two years, Jephthah six years, Ibzan seven years, Elom ten years, Abdon eight years, Samson twenty years = two hundred and ninety-six.

Eli forty years, Samuel twenty years (1 Sam. vii. 15), David forty years, Solomon four = one hundred and four. Add to the four hundred the two generations of the wanderings and Joshua, and we again have four hundred and eighty; but quite as arbitrarily, for the period of Saul is omitted.[1]

The problems of early Hebrew chronology cannot yet be regarded as even approximately solved.

[1] See Reuss, *Hist. d'Israel*, i. 101-103.

THE

SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

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LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE; ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER

NEW YORK

A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON

3 and 5 West Eighteenth Street

London: Hodder and Stoughton

1903

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

AHAZIAH BEN-AHAB OF ISRAEL (B.C. 855–854) . . 3

A weak, shadowy, and faithless king—1. Relations between Judah and Israel—2. Alliance with Jehoshaphat—3. Revolt of Moab—Mesha and the Moabite Stone—4. The fall from the lattice—Baal-Zebub—Elijah calling down fire from heaven—How are we to judge respecting the Elijah-spirit?—Variations of moral standard.

CHAPTER II

THE ASCENSION OF ELIJAH 19

Uncertain date—The journey to Gilgal; to Bethel; to Jericho; to the Jordan—The double portion—Chariot and horses of fire—Elisha recrosses the Jordan—The young prophets and their search—Grandeur of Elijah.

CHAPTER III

ELISHA 25

Cycle of supernatural stories—Elisha and Elijah—The cure of the unwholesome fountain—"Go up, thou bald-head"—The children and the bears.

CHAPTER IV

THE INVASION OF MOAB 29

Death of Ahaziah—Jehoram Ben-Ahab of Israel—Good beginnings—Attempts to recover Moab—Alliance with Judah and Edom—The invasion—An army perishing of thirst—Elisha—Music—Trenches in the wâdy—Error of the Moabites

PAGE

Their disastrous rout—Devastation of the country—Mesha propitiates Chemosh—"Great wrath against Israel"—The invading army retreats.

CHAPTER V

ELISHA'S MIRACLES 40

Their chronological vagueness—Difference between Elisha and Elijah—Contrasts and resemblances—Social life in Israel—1. The widow and the oil—2. The lady of Shunem—Her hospitality—Her reward—3. The boy's death—Her distress—The resuscitation—4. Death in the pot—5. The multiplied first-fruits.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF NAAMA 50

The little maid—The leper—Letter of Benhadad to Jehoram—His indignation—Elisha's message—Naaman's disappointment and anger—His servants—His healing—His gratitude—Bowing in the house of Rimmon—Mean cupidity of Gehazi—Stricken with leprosy—The axe-head.

CHAPTER VII

ELISHA AND THE SYRIANS 66

Syrian marauders—They are baffled—Anger of Benhadad—The vision at Dothan—Meaning of the promises—How fulfilled to God's saints on earth—Some are delivered, some are not—Elisha misleads the Syrians—His generosity to them—Its effects—A fresh Syrian invasion.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAMINE AND THE SIEGE 76

Horrible straits of the besieged Samaritans—Stress of famine—The King of Israel—The miserable women—Sackcloth under the purple—The king's fury and despair—He threatens Elisha—The messenger—Th king upbraids him—Prophecy of sudden plenty—The disbelieving lord—The extramural lepers—The Syrian camp—The king's misgivings—The lord killed in the rush of the people.

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

THE SHUNAMMITE AND HAZAEL 87

The lady of Shunem leaves her estate—Her return—Gehazi talks with the king—Entrance of the Shunammite—Her estates restored—Elisha visits Damascus—A royal present—Benhadad's illness—Hazael—The dark prophecy—Unexplained death of Benhadad—Hazael's usurpation—Real meaning of Elisha's words to Hazael.

CHAPTER X

TWO SONS OF JEHOSHAPHAT 99

Jehoram (B.C. 851–843)—Ahaziah (B.C. 843–842)—Jehoram ben-Jehoshaphat of Judah—Perplexing uncertainty of minute chronological details—The blight of the Jezebel-alliance—The husband of Athaliah—His apostasies—Revolt of Edom—Narrow escape of Jehoram—Revolt of Libnah—Jehoram's murder by his brethren—Philistine invasion—Incurable disease—Ahaziah ben-Jehoram—Joins his uncle (Jehoram ben-Ahab) in the campaign against Ramoth-Gilead—Visits him at Jezreel—Shot down by Jehu.

CHAPTER XI

THE REVOLT OF JEHU (B.C. 842) 106

Misery of Jehoram's reign—Thwarted invasion of Moab—Aggression of Benhadad—At Ramoth-Gilead—The young prophet — The two kings absent from the camp — The dangerous commission — The assembled captains — Jehu secretly anointed—His accession enthusiastically welcomed by the army—His sudden enthronement—His swift resolution—The watchman at Jezreel—The two horsemen—The two kings—Their murder—Ferocity of Jehu—Elijah's prophecy—Jezebel—She is hurled down—Jehu drives over her body—The curse fulfilled.

CHAPTER XII.

JEHU ESTABLISHED ON THE THRONE (B.C. 842–814) . 125

His politic subtlety—The murder of the seventy princes—The ghastly heaps—Hypocritic ferocity.

CHAPTER XIII

PAGE

FRESH MURDERS—THE EXTIRPATION OF BAAL-WORSHIP (B.C. 842) 131

Wading through blood to a throne—The ride to Samaria—The brethren of Ahaziah of Judah—The corpse-choked tank of the shepherds—The Bedawy ascetic—The scene of slaughter in the temple of Baal—Did Elisha approve of these atrocities?—Prophetic judgment on Jehu—Ravages of Hazael—Jehu's anguish—He pays tribute to Assyria.

CHAPTER XIV

ATHALIAH (B.C. 842–836)—JOASH OF JUDAH (B.C. 836–796) 146

The murderess-daughter of Jezebel—Fierce ambition—Jehosheba—The rescued child—Reared in the Temple—The high priest's plot—The coronation of the boy-king—Athaliah enters the Temple—Her murder—The fate of Baal's high priest—Proposed restoration of the Temple—Joash calls to task the defaulting priests—Death of Jehoiada—Defection of Joash—Murder of Zechariah—Bad record of the line of Jewish priests—Hazael attacks Judah—Defeat of Joash and plunder of Jerusalem—Murder of Joash—Names of the murderers.

CHAPTER XV

AMAZIAH OF JUDAH (B.C. 796–783 [?]) . . . 167

The House of David—Amaziah brings to justice the murderers of his father, but spares their children—Grounds for this—Different views taken of him by the historian and the chronicler—Splendid victory of Amaziah in the Valley of Salt—Expansion of the story in the Chronicles—His defiance of Joash—His defeat and murder.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DYNASTY OF JEHU—JEHOAHAZ (B.C. 814–797) —JOASH (B.C. 797–781) 175

Israel at its nadir—Calf-worship—Oppression of Hazael—Disappearance of Elisha—Repentance of Jehoahaz—Joash

PAGE

of Israel visits the death-bed of Elisha—"The arrow of the Lord's deliverance"—Three victories over the Syrians—Death of Elisha, and posthumous marvels—Joash and Amaziah—Contemptuous answer to the King of Judah—Crushing defeat of Judah.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DYNASTY OF JEHU (CONTINUED)—JEROBOAM II. (B.C. 781–740) 187

Jeroboam II. the greatest of the kings of Israel—His conquests and wide dominion—A dying gleam of prosperity—Cause of his success—Relations with Assyria—Dawn of written prophecy—Jonah.

CHAPTER XVIII

AMOS AND HOSEA—ZACHARIAH BEN-JEROBOAM B.C. 740) 193

Amos describes the condition of Israel—Growth of usury and vice—Humble origin of Amos—His burdens—Degenerations of the "calf-worship"—Uncompromising denunciation —Collision of Amos with Amaziah the high priest at Bethel—His expulsion from Bethel—The curse denounced—His justification of his mission—Hosea the saddest of the prophets——His pictures of Ephraim—Jeroboam II.—His death—His son Zachariah—His desertion and shameful end.

CHAPTER XIX

UZZIAH OF JUDAH (B.C. 783 [?]–737)—JOTHAM (B.C. 737–735) 209

Wane of Assyria—Uzziah a wise and good king—His other name Azariah—Expansion of the story of his conquests in the Chronicles—Training of his army—Defeated by the Assyrians (?)—Stricken with leprosy—The story—Jotham acts as his public representative—Diminished power of Judah under Jotham—Beginning of Isaiah's prophecies—Death of Jotham.

CHAPTER XX

PAGE

THE AGONY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM—SHALLUM, MENAHEM PEKAHIAH, PEKAH (B.C. 740–734) . 217

Shallum, an usurping murderer—Rapid disappearance of kings—Distracted epoch—The prophet Zechariah and the three shepherds—Zechariah's prophecies—The cruel shepherd, Menahem—His savage deeds—Portentous appearance of the Assyrians in Israel—Menahem pays tribute—Tiglath-Pileser—Fulfilment of Hosea's prophecy—Pekahiah—His murder—Pekah—His alliance with Rezin against Judah—Ahaz appeals to Assyria—Defeat and death of Rezin—Fulfilment of prophecy of Amos—Beginning of the captivity of the Ten Tribes—Tiglath-Pileser's successors—Murder of Pekah by Hoshea—Horrible state of Israel as described by Isaiah.

CHAPTER XXI

KING HOSHEA AND THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM (B.C. 734–725) 235

The name Hoshea—The king and the prophet—Occasional gleams of hope and promise—A humiliating reign—Death of Tiglath-Pileser—Hoshea revolts to Sabaco of Egypt—Seized by Shalmaneser—Samaria besieged—Terrible state of the city—Sabaco renders no help—Usurpation of Sargon—Capture of the city—Greatness of Sargon—Fall of the Northern Kingdom—Blighted destiny—God's mercy—"God, and not man"—Despoliation of the tribes—Moral of the story—Assyria and Egypt—The strength and weakness of a nation—Machiavelli—Mixture of alien emigrants—Their worship—The lions—Strange syncretism—The Jews and the Samaritans.

CHAPTER XXII

THE REIGN OF AHAZ (B.C. 735–715) 260

The chronology—A distracted kingdom—Dark pictures from Isaiah—No sign of repentance—Grapes and wild grapes.

CHAPTER XXIII

PAGE

ISAIAH AND AHAZ 265

Isaiah—Rezin and Pekah—Ahaz meets Isaiah—He receives a promise of deliverance—He refuses a sign—The sign given him—Immanuel—Birth of Messianic prophecy—Maher-shalal-hash-baz—The promised Deliverer.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE APOSTASIES OF AHAZ 273

Moloch-worship—Sacrifice of children—Ahaz appeals to Assyria for help—Ruin of Damascus and death of Rezin—Ahaz does homage to Tiglath-Pileser at Damascus—Records of Tiglath-Pileser—The new altar—Complaisance of the priest Urijah—Unpopularity of Ahaz—Further misgivings—His death.

CHAPTER XXV

HEZEKIAH (B.C. 715–686) 287

Dates—Importance of the reign—Hezekiah's age—His character—His reformation—Partial suppression of the *bamoth*—Removal of the *matstseboth* and *Asherim*—Destruction of the brazen serpent—Trust in Jehovah—Psalm xlvi.—Chastisement of the Philistines—Three parties in Jerusalem—1. The Assyrian party—2. The Egyptian party—3. The national party—Its attitude to the others—Micah—Mockery of Egypt—Anger and insults of the priests against Isaiah—Confidence of Isaiah—Waverings of Hezekiah.

CHAPTER XXVI

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS—THE BABYLONIAN EMBASSY . 305

The story of Hezekiah's illness misplaced—At the point of death—Isaiah's message—The king's agony of mind—The prayer—The reprieve—The sun-dial of Ahaz—The king's gratitude and thanksgiving—Merodach-Baladan—Rising power of Babylon—Object of the embassy—The king's action—The prophet's reproof—The king's humble submission.

CHAPTER XXVII

PAGE

HEZEKIAH AND ASSYRIA (B.C. 701) 319

Greatness of Sargon—His campaigns—Defeat of Egypt at the battle of Raphia—Ashdod—Defeat of Merodach-Baladan —Grandeur of Sennacherib—His invasion of Judæa—Earlier collisions—His campaigns—1. Against Babylon—2. Against Elam—3. Against the Hittites and Philistines—Defeat of the Ethiopian Tirhakah at Altaqu—Heavy mulct imposed on Hezekiah—Siege of Lachish—Sennacherib breaks his compact—Distress o erusalem.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GREAT DELIVERANCE (B.C. 701) 331

Embassy of the Turtan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh —Misery and licence in the city—The conference—Oration of the Rabshakeh—Its effect on the g's ministers and on the people—Taunting insults of the Rabshakeh—Faithfulnes and self-control of the people—Heroic faith of Isaiah—Failure of the embassy—Sennacherib's threatening letter—Hezekiah's prayer—Isaiah promises deliverance in the name of Jehovah —The sign—The angel of death—Scene of the catastrophe— The Egyptian tradition of Sethos and the mice—Death and burial of Hezekiah—The campaign as recorded on the Assyrian monuments—The triumph of indomitable faith—Grandeur of Isaiah—Wane of Assyria—Beautiful tolerance of Isaiah.

CHAPTER XXIX

MANASSEH (B.C. 686–641) 351

The name Manasseh—His tender age—Influence of evil counsellors—Heathenising party—Their dislike of Hezekiah's reformation and of the exclusive worship of Jehovah — Tendency to trust in sacrifices and asceticism—Sanctification of licence—Arguments of the heathenisers—Disparagement of the work of Isaiah—Doubts and disbelief—Influence of the *bamoth*-priests—Reliance on Assyria—The immoral and idolatrous reaction—1. Restoration of the *bamoth*, and arguments in their favour—2. Adoption of Phœnician nature-

PAGE

worship—3. Assyrian Sabaism and star-worship—Connivance of the priests—4. Canaanite Moloch-worship—5. Mesopotamian Shamanism—6. The *Asherah*—Denunciation of the prophets—Persecution and the shedding of innocent blood—Asserted captivity, repentance, and reforming energy of Manasseh—Difficulties of the story—Reign of Amon (B.C. 641-639)—Wretchedness of his reign—Zephaniah and Jeremiah—Murder of Amon.

CHAPTER XXX

JOSIAH (B.C. 639-608) 374

Three vast movements—Jeremiah's earlier prophecies—The state of society—The Scythians—Prophecies of Ezekiel—Herodotus—The fate of Nineveh—Rise of the Chaldæans—Habakkuk.

CHAPTER XXXI

JOSIAH'S REFORMATION 385

Growth of Josiah's character—Repairs of the Temple—Hilkiah finds the Book of the Law—Intense effect produced on mind of the king—His message to the prophetess Huldah—Great assembly—Renewal of a solemn league and covenant with Jehovah—The *bamoth*-priests degraded—Defiling of Tophet—He carries the reformation into Samaria—Its stringency and severity—The Passover—Suppression of heathen corruptions—Jeremiah's share in the reformation—Its dangers and disappointing results—Jeremiah's warnings against all trust in externals—The prophecy of a new covenant—NOTE TO CHAPTER XXXI.: The Book found in the Temple.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEATH OF JOSIAH (B.C. 608) 402

Prosperity and happiness of Josiah—Accession of the great Pharaoh Necho II.—His excursion against Carchemish—Josiah determines to bar his path—Warnings of Pharaoh Necho—Disaster at Megiddo and death of Josiah—Mistaken hopes—God's dealings with men and nations—Distress among Josiah's subjects—The king's burial—Misgivings respecting the future—Sorrow of Jeremiah—Ultimate fulfilments.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PAGE

JEHOAHAZ (B.C. 608) 411

Four sons of Josiah—Shallum chosen by the people of the land—Elegy of Ezekiel—Change of name from Shallum to Jehoahaz—Conquests of Pharaoh Necho II.—Jehoahaz summoned to Riblah—Carried captive by Pharaoh to Egypt—Tribute imposed on Judæa.

CHAPTER XXXIV

JEHOIAKIM (B.C. 608–597) 416

Eliakim—His change of name—Ignored by Ezekiel—Evil influences—Æsthetic selfishness and oppressive greed—Denunciation by Habakkuk—Denunciation by Jeremiah—Murder of Urijah—Threatened murder of Jeremiah averted by Ahikam—Fall of Nineveh—Utterances of the prophets—Rise of the Chaldæans—Nabupolassar—Defeat of Pharaoh Necho by Nebuchadrezzar—His return to Babylon—His invasion of Judæa—Beginning of the Babylonian captivity—Jehoiakim revolts to Egypt in spite of Jeremiah's warnings—Imprisonment of Jeremiah—Baruch—The menacing roll—Alarm of the princes—Rage of the king—He cuts the scroll to pieces and burns it—Wretchedness of the times—A great drought—Captives of Jerusalem—Miserable death of Jehoiakim—"That which was found in him."

CHAPTER XXXV

JEHOIACHIN (B.C. 597) 431

Bad influence over him—His brief reign—Allusions to him by Jeremiah at Jerusalem—Second captivity—Regret felt for Jehoiachin—Did he die childless?

CHAPTER XXXVI

ZEDEKIAH, THE LAST KING OF JUDAH (B.C. 597–586) 437

His oath to the King of Assyria—Ezekiel's prophecies—The exiles and the remnant—Weakness of Zedekiah—Continuance of idolatry as described by Ezekiel—The king breaks his

PAGE

oath with Assyria—Indignation and warnings of Jeremiah—The false prophet Hananiah—The wooden and iron yokes—Death of Hananiah—False prophets—The broken covenant—Advance of Nebuchadrezzar—Belomancy and Babylonian divinations—Siege of Jerusalem—Gloom of Jeremiah's prophecies.

CHAPTER XXXVII

JEREMIAH AND HIS PROPHECIES 449

Pathos of Jeremiah's lot—The sad epoch in which he lived—Religious changes—Arrest of eremiah—Progress of the siege—Zedekiah sends for the prophet—His hardships alleviated—Horrors of famine—Wicked defiance—A sudden death—Anger of the priests and nobles against Jeremiah—He is thrust into a miry pit—Compassion of Ebed-Melech—Purchase of a field at Anathoth—Secret interview with Zedekiah—It becomes known—Distress of Zedekiah.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM (B.C. 586) 457

Nebuzaradan and the Babylonians—The final captivity—Dreadful fate of Zedekiah—Prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah—Sack of the city—Massacre of the chief inhabitants—Burning of the city and Temple—Desolation—Respect shown by the Babylonian general to Jeremiah—He decides to remain with the remnant in Judæa.

CHAPTER XXXIX

GEDALIAH (B.C. 586) 465

Sad parting from the exiles—The wail at Ramah—Gedaliah's appointment as satrap perhaps due to Jeremiah—Desolation of Jerusalem—The seat of government removed to Mizpah—A respite and a gleam of hope—Guerilla bands—Johanan warns Gedaliah against Ishmael—Unsuspecting generosity of the governor—He receives Ishmael and his confederates with hospitality—He is brutally murdered—Massacre of the pilgrims from Shiloh—The horrible well—Johanan pursues Ishmael—His escape—Proposal to migrate

PAGE

to Egypt—Jeremiah consulted—His advice refused—Prophecy of Jeremiah at the khan of Chimham—Kindness shown by Evil-Merodach to Jehoiachin.

EPILOGUE 477

The interest of the preceding history and the great moral lessons which it involves—The central conceptions of Hebrew prophecy—The end of the whole matter.

APPENDIX I

THE KINGS OF ASSYRIA, AND SOME OF THEIR INSCRIPTIONS 487

APPENDIX II

INSCRIPTION IN THE TUNNEL OF THE POOL OF SILOAM 493

APPENDIX III

WAS THERE A GOLDEN CALF AT DAN? . . . 494

APPENDIX IV

DATES OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH, AS GIVEN BY KITTEL AND OTHER MODERN CRITICS . 495

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

"Theories of inspiration which impaginate the Everlasting Spirit, and make each verse a cluster of objectless and mechanical miracles, are not seriously believed by any one: the Bible itself abides in its endless power and unexhausted truth. All that is not of asbestos is being burned away by the restless fires of thought and criticism. That which remains is enough, and it is indestructible."—BISHOP OF DERRY.

CHAPTER I

AHAZIAH BEN-AHAB OF ISRAEL

B.C. 855—854

2 KINGS i. 1—18

"Ye know not of what spirit are ye."—LUKE ix. 55.

"He is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises."—HEB. viii. 6.

AHAZIAH, the eldest son and successor of Ahab, has been called "the most shadowy of the Israelitish kings."[1] He seems to have been in all respects one of the most weak, faithless, and deplorably miserable. He did but reign two years—perhaps in reality little more than one; but this brief space was crowded with intolerable disasters. Everything that he touched seemed to be marked out for ruin or failure, and in character he showed himself a true son of Jezebel and Ahab.

What results followed the defeat of Ahab and Jehoshaphat at Ramoth-Gilead we are not told. The

[1] Rawlinson, *Kings of Israel and Judah*, p. 86. "The name of Ahaziah ('the Lord taketh hold'), like that of all Ahab's sons, testifies to the fact that the husband of Jezebel still worshipped Jehovah. Among the names of the judges and kings before Ahab in Israel, and Asa in Judah, scarcely a single instance occurs of names compounded with Jehovah; thenceforward they became the rule" (Wellhausen, *Israel and Judah*, Ed. 1, p. 66).

war must have ended in terms of peace of some kind—perhaps in the cession of Ramoth-Gilead; for Ahaziah does not seem to have been disturbed during his brief reign by any Syrian invasion. Nor were there any troubles on the side of Judah. Ahaziah's sister was the wife of Jehoshaphat's heir, and the good understanding between the two kingdoms was so closely cemented, that in both royal houses there was an identity of names—two Ahaziahs and two Jehorams.

But even the Judæan alliance was marked with misfortune. Jehoshaphat's prosperity and ambition, together with his firm dominance over Edom—in which country he had appointed a vassal, who was sometimes allowed the courtesy title of king[1]—led him to emulate Solomon by an attempt to revive the old maritime enterprise which had astonished Jerusalem with ivory, and apes, and peacocks imported from India. He therefore built "ships of Tarshish" at Ezion-Geber to sail to Ophir. They were called "Tarshish-ships," because they were of the same build as those which sailed to Tartessus, in Spain, from Joppa. Ahaziah was to some extent associated with him in the enterprise. But it turned out even more disastrously than it had done in former times. So unskilled was the seamanship of those days among all nations except the Phœnicians, that the whole fleet was wrecked and shattered to pieces in the very harbour of Ezion-Geber before it had set sail.

Ahaziah, whose affinity with the King of Tyre and possession of some of the western ports had given his subjects more knowledge of ships and voyages, then proposed to Jehoshaphat that the vessels

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 47; 2 Kings iii. 9: comp. viii. 20.

should be manned with sailors from Israel as well as Judah. But Jehoshaphat was tired of a futile and expensive effort. He refused a partnership which might easily lead to complications, and on which the prophets of Jehovah frowned. It was the last attempt made by the Israelites to become merchants by sea as well as by land.

Ahaziah's brief reign was marked by one immense humiliation. David, who extended the dominion of the Hebrews in all directions, had smitten the Moabites, and inflicted on them one of the horrible atrocities against which the ill-instructed conscience of men in those days of ignorance did not revolt.[1] He had made the male warriors lie on the ground, and then, measuring them by lines, he put every two lines to death and kept one alive. After this the Moabites had continued to be tributaries. They had fallen to the share of the Northern Kingdom, and yearly acknowledged the suzerainty of Israel by paying a heavy tribute of the fleeces of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams. But now that the warrior Ahab was dead, and Israel had been crushed by the catastrophe at Ramoth-Gilead, Mesha, the energetic viceroy of Moab, seized his opportunity to revolt and to break from the neck of his people the odious yoke. The revolt was entirely successful. The sacred historian gives us no details, but one of the most priceless of modern archæological discoveries has confirmed the Scriptural reference by securing and translating a

[1] **2 Sam. viii. 2.** On the ethics of these wars of extermination, such as are commanded in the Pentateuch, and were practised by Joshua, Samuel, Saul, David, and others, see Josh. vi. 17; 1 Sam. xv. 3, 33; 2 Sam. viii. 2, etc., and Mozley's *Lectures on the Old Testament*, pp. 83–103.

fragment of Mesha's own account of the annals of his reign. We have, in what is called "The Moabite Stone," the memorial written in glorification of himself and of his god Chemosh, "the abomination of the children of Ammon," by a contemporary of Ahab and Jehoshaphat.[1] It is the oldest specimen which we possess of Hebrew writing; perhaps the only specimen, except the Siloam inscription, which has come down to us from before the date of the Exile. It was discovered in 1878 by the German missionary Klein, amid the ruins of the royal city of Daibon (Dibon, Num. xxi. 30), and was purchased for the Berlin Museum in 1879. Owing to all kinds of errors and intrigues, it did not remain in the hands of its purchaser, but was broken into fragments by the nomad tribe of Beni Hamide, from whom it was in some way obtained by M. Clermont-Ganneau. There is no ground for questioning its perfect genuineness, though the discovery of its value led to the forgery of a number of spurious and often indecent inscriptions. There can be no reasonable doubt that when we look at it we see before us the identical memorial of triumph which the Moabite emîr erected in the days of Ahaziah on the *bamah* of Chemosh at Dibon, one of his chief towns.

This document is supremely interesting, not only for its historical allusions, but also as an illustration of customs and modes of thought which have left their traces in the records of the people of Jehovah, as well as in those of the people of Chemosh.[2] Mesha tells us that his father reigned in Dibon for thirty years, and

[1] See Stade, i. 86. He gives a photograph and translation of it at p. 534.

[2] See *Records of the Past*, xi. 166, 167.

that he succeeded. He reared this stone to Chemosh in the town of Karcha, as a memorial of gratitude for the assistance which had resulted in the overthrow of all his enemies. Omri, King of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days, because Chemosh was wroth with his people. Ahaziah wished to oppress Moab as his father had done. But Chemosh enabled Mesha to recover Medeba, and afterwards Baal-Meon, Kirjatan, Ataroth, Nebo, and Jahaz, which he reoccupied and rebuilt. Perhaps they had been practically abandoned by all effective Israelite garrisons. In some of these towns he put the inhabitants under a ban, and sacrificed them to Moloch in a great slaughter. In Nebo alone he slew seven thousand men. Having turned many towns into fortresses, he was enabled to defy Israel altogether, to refuse the old burdensome tribute, and to re-establish a strong Moabite kingdom east of the Dead Sea; for Israel was wholly unable to meet his forces in the open field. Month after month of the reign of the miserable son of Ahab must have been marked by tidings of shame, defeat, and massacre.

Added to these public calamities, there came to Ahaziah a terrible personal misfortune. As he was coming down from the roof of his palace, he seems to have stopped to lean against the lattice of some window or balcony in his upper chamber in Samaria.[1] It gave way under his weight, and he was hurled down into the courtyard or street below. He was so seriously hurt that he spent the rest of his reign on a sick-bed in pain and weakness, and ultimately died of the injuries he had received.

A succession of woes so grievous might well have

[1] 2 Kings i. 2; Heb., *be'ad hass'bakāh*; LXX., διὰ τοῦ δικτυωτοῦ; Lg., *per cancellos* (comp. 1 Kings vii. 18; 2 Chron. iv. 12).

awakened the wretched king to serious thought. But he had been trained under the idolatrous influences of his mother. As though it were not enough for him to walk in the steps of Ahab, of Jezebel, and of Jeroboam, he had the fatuity to go out of his way to patronise another and yet more odious superstition. Ekron was the nearest town to him of the Philistine Pentapolis, and at Ekron was established the local cult of a particular Baal known as Baal-Zebub ("the lord of flies").[1] Flies, which in temperate countries are sometimes an intense annoyance, become in tropical climates an intolerable plague. Even the Greeks had their Zeus Apomuios ("Zeus the averter of flies"), and some Greek tribes worshipped Zeus Ipuktonos ("Zeus the slayer of vermin"), and Zeus Muiagros and Apomuios, and Apollo Smintheus ("the destroyer of mice").[2] The Romans, too, among the numberless quaint heroes of their Pantheon, had a certain Myiagrus and Myiodes, whose function it was to keep flies at a distance.[3] This fly-god, Baal-Zebub of Ekron, had an oracle, to whose lying responses

[1] LXX., Βάαλ μυῖαν θεὸν Ἀκκαρών. So, too, Jos., *Antt.*, IX. ii. 1. It is possible that the god was represented holding a fly as the type of pestilence, just as the statue of Pthah held in its hands a mouse (Herod., ii. 141). Flies convey all kinds of contagion (Plin., *H. N.*, x. 28).

[2] Pausan., v. 14, § 2.

[3] The name, or a derisive modification of it, was given by the Jews in the days of Christ to the prince of the devils. In Matt. xii. 24 the true reading is Βεελζεβούλ, which perhaps means (in contempt) "the lord of dung"; but might mean "the lord of the [celestial] habitation" (οἰκοδεσπότην). Comp. Matt. x. 25; Eph. ii. 2; "Baal Shamaim," the Belsamen of Augustine (Gesen., *Monum. Phœnic.*, 387; Movers, *Phönizier*, i. 176). For "opprobrious puns" applied to idols, see Lightfoot, *Exercitationes ad Matt.*, xii. 24. The common word for idols, *gilloolim*, is perhaps connected with *galal*, "dung." Hitzig thinks that the god was represented under the symbol of the *Scarabæus pillularius*, or dung-beetle.

the young and superstitious prince attached implicit credence. That a king of Israel professing any sort of allegiance to Jehovah, and having hundreds of prophets in his own kingdom, should send an embassy to the shrine of an abominable local divinity in a town of the Philistines—whose chief object of worship was

> "That twice-battered god of Palestine,
> Who mourned in earnest when the captive ark
> Maimed his brute image on the grunsel edge
> Where he fell flat, and shamed his worshippers"—

was, it must be admitted, an act of apostasy more outrageously insulting than had ever yet been perpetrated by any Hebrew king. Nothing can more clearly illustrate the callous indifference shown by the race of Jezebel to the lessons which God had so decisively taught them by Elijah and by Micaiah.

But

Quem vult Deus perire, dementat prius;

and in this "dementation preceding doom" Ahaziah sent to ask the fly-god's oracle whether he should recover of his injury. His infatuated perversity became known to Elijah, who was bidden by "the angel," or messenger, "of the Lord"—which may only be the recognised phrase in the prophetic schools, putting in a concrete and vivid form the voice of inward inspiration—to go up, apparently on the road towards Samaria, and meet the messengers of Ahaziah on their way to Ekron. Where Elijah was at the time we do not know. Ten years had elapsed since the calling of Elisha, and four since Elijah had confronted Ahab at the door of Naboth's vineyard. In the interval he has not once been mentioned, nor can we conjecture with the least certainty whether he had been living in congenial

solitude or had been helping to train the Sons of the Prophets in the high duties of their calling. Why he had not appeared to support Micaiah we cannot tell. Now, at any rate, the son of Ahab was drawing upon himself an ancient curse by going a-whoring after wizards and familiar spirits, and it was high time for Elijah to interfere.[1]

The messengers had not proceeded far on their way when the prophet met them, and sternly bade them go back to their king, with the denunciation, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that ye go to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Now, therefore, thus saith Jehovah, 'Thou shalt not descend from that bed on which thou art gone up, but dying thou shalt die.'"

He spoke, and after his manner vanished with no less suddenness.

The messengers, overawed by that startling apparition, did not dream of daring to disobey. They at once went back to the king, who, astonished at their reappearance before they could possibly have reached the oracle, asked them why they had returned.

They told him of the apparition by which they had been confronted. That it was a prophet who had spoken to them they knew; but the appearances of Elijah had been so few, and at such long intervals, that they knew not who he was.

"What sort of man was he that spoke to you?" asked the king.

"He was," they answered, "a lord of hair,[2] and girded about his loins with a girdle of skin."[3]

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[1] Lev. xx. 6.

[2] בַּעַל שֵׂעָר (LXX., *δασύς*), whether in reference to his long shaggy locks, or his sheepskin *addereth*, *μηλωτή* (Zech. xiii. 4; Heb. xii. 37).

[3] *ζώνη δερματίνη* (Matt. iii. 4).

Too well did Ahaziah recognise from this description the enemy of his guilty race! If he had not been present on Carmel, or at Jezreel, on the occasions when that swart and shaggy figure of the awful Wanderer had confronted his father, he must have often heard descriptions of this strange Bedawy ascetic who "feared man so little because he feared God so much."

"It is Elijah the Tishbite!" he exclaimed, with a bitterness which was succeeded by fierce wrath; and with something of his mother's indomitable rage he sent a captain with fifty soldiers to arrest him.

The captain found Elijah sitting at the top of "the hill," perhaps of Carmel; and what followed is thus described:—

"Thou man of God," he cried, "the king hath said, Come down."

There was something strangely incongruous in this rude address. The title "man of God" seems first to have been currently given to Elijah, and it recognises his inspired mission as well as the supernatural power which he was believed to wield. How preposterous, then, was it to bid a man of God to obey a king's order and to give himself up to imprisonment or death!

"If I be a man of God," said Elijah, "then let fire come down from heaven, to consume thee and thy fifty."[1]

The fire fell and reduced them all to ashes.[2]

Undeterred by so tremendous a consummation, the king sent another captain with his fifty, who repeated the order in terms yet more imperative.[3]

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[1] There is perhaps an intentional play of words between "man (אִישׁ) of God" and "fire (אֵשׁ) of God" (Klostermann).

[2] Hebrew.

[3] "Come down *quickly*" (2 Kings i. 9).

Again Elijah called down the fire from heaven, and the second captain with his fifty soldiers was reduced to ashes.

For the third time the obstinate king, whose infatuation must indeed have been transcendent, despatched a captain with his fifty. But he, warned by the fate of his predecessors, went up to Elijah and fell on his knees, and implored him to spare the life of himself and his fifty innocent soldiers.

Then "the angel of the Lord" bade Elijah go down to the king with him and not be afraid.

What are we to think of this narrative?

Of course, if we are to judge it on such moral grounds as we learn from the spirit of the Gospel, Christ Himself has taught us to condemn it. There have been men who so hideously misunderstood the true lessons of revelation as to applaud such deeds, and hold them up for modern imitation. The dark persecutors of the Spanish Inquisition, nay, even men like Calvin and Beza, argued from this scene that "fire is the proper instrument for the punishment of heretics." To all who have been thus misled by a false and superstitious theory of inspiration, Christ Himself says, with unmistakable plainness, as He said to the Sons of Thunder at Engannim, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of. I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save."[1] In the abstract, and judged by Christian standards, the

[1] Luke ix. 51–56. This is a more than sufficient answer to the censure of Theodoret, that "they who condemn the prophet are wagging their tongues against God." The remark is based on utter misapprehension; and if we are to form no judgment on the morality of Scripture examples, they would be of no help for us. Compare the striking remark of the minister to Balfour of Burleigh in Scott's *Old Mortality*.

calling down of lightning to consume more than a hundred soldiers, who were but obeying the orders of a king—the protection of personal safety by the miraculous destruction of a king's messengers—could only be regarded as a deed of horror. "There are few tracks of Elijah that are ordinary and fit for common feet," says Bishop Hall; and he adds, "Not in his own defence would the prophet have been the death of so many, if God had not, by a peculiar instinct, made him an instrument of His just vengeance."[1]

For myself, I more than doubt whether we have any right to appeal to these "peculiar instincts" and unrecorded inspirations; and it is so important that we should not form utterly false views of what Scripture does and does not teach, that we must once more deal with this narrative quite plainly, and not beat about the bush with the untenable devices and effeminate euphemisms of commentators, who give us the "to-and-fro-conflicting" apologies of *a priori* theory instead of the clear judgments of inflexible morality.

"It is impossible not to feel," says Professor Milligan,[2] "that the events thus presented to us are of a very startling kind, and that it is not easy to reconcile them either with the conception that we form of an honoured servant of God, or with our ideas of eternal justice. Elijah rather appears to us at first sight as a proud, arrogant, and merciless wielder of the power committed to him: we wonder that an answer should have been given to his prayer; we are shocked at the destruction of so many men, who listened only to the command of their captain and their king; and we cannot help contrasting Elijah's conduct, as a whole, with the

[1] Quoted by Rev. Professor Lumby, *ad loc.*

[2] *Elijah*, p. 146.

beneficent and loving tenderness of the New Testament dispensation."

Professor Milligan proceeds rightly to set aside the attempts which have been made to represent the first two captains and their fifties as especially guilty—which is a most flimsy hypothesis, and would not in any case touch the heart of the matter. He says that the event stands on exactly the same footing as the slaughter of the 450 prophets of Baal at Kishon, and of the 3000 idolaters by order of Moses at Sinai; the swallowing up of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; the ban of total extirpation on Jericho and on Canaan; the sweeping massacre of the Amalekites by Saul; and many similar instances of recorded savagery. But the reference to analogous acts furnishes no justification for those acts. What, then, is their justification, if any can be found?

Some would defend them on the grounds that the potter may do what he likes with the clay. That analogy, though perfectly admissible when used for the purpose to which it is applied by St. Paul, is grossly inapplicable to such cases as this. St. Paul uses it simply to prove that we cannot judge or understand the purposes of God, in which, as he shows, mercy often lies behind apparent severity. But, when urged to maintain the rectitude of sweeping judgments in which a man arms his own feebleness with the omnipotence of Heaven, they amount to no more than the tyrant's plea that "might makes right." "Man is a reed," said Pascal, "but he is a *thinking* reed." He may not therefore be indiscriminately crushed. He was made by God in His image, after His likeness, and therefore his rights have a Divine and indefeasible sanction.

All that can be said is that these deeds of wholesale severity were not in disaccord with the conscience even of many of the best Old Testament saints. They did not feel the least compunction in inflicting judgments on whole populations in a way which would argue in us an infamous callousness. Nay, their consciences approved of those deeds; they were but acting up to the standard of their times, and they regarded themselves as righteous instruments of divinely directed vengeance.[1] Take, for instance, the frightful Eastern law which among the Jews no less than among Babylonians and Persians thought nothing of overwhelming the innocent with the guilty in the same catastrophe; which required the stoning, not only of Achan, but of all Achan's innocent family, as an expiation for his theft; and the stoning, not only of Naboth, but also of Naboth's sons, in requital for his asserted blasphemy. Two reasons may be assigned for the chasm between their moral sense and ours on such subjects—one was their amazing indifference to the sacredness of human life, and the other their invariable habit of regarding men in their corporate relations rather than in their individual capacity. Our conscience teaches us that to slay the innocent with the guilty is an action of monstrous injustice;[2] but they, regarding each person as indissolubly mixed up with all his family and tribe, magnified the conception

[1] This is practically the sum-total of the answer given again and again by Canon Mozley in his *Lectures on the Old Testament*, 2nd edition, 1878. For instance, he says that "the Jewish idea of justice gives us the reason why the Divine commands (of exterminating wars, etc.) were then adapted to man as the agent for executing them, and are not adapted now" (p. 102).

[2] Comp. Ezek. xviii. 2–30.

of *corporate responsibility*, and merged the individual in the mass.

It is clear that, if we take the narrative literally, Elijah would not have felt the least remorse in calling fire from heaven to consume these scores of soldiers, because the prophetic narrator who recorded the story, perhaps two centuries later, must have understood the spirit of those days, and certainly felt no shame for the prophet's act of vengeance. On the contrary, he relates it with entire approval for the glorification of his hero. We cannot blame him for not rising above the moral standard of his age. He held that the natural manifestation of an angry Jehovah was, literally or metaphorically, in consuming fire. Considering the slow education of mankind in the most elementary principles of mercy and righteousness, we must not judge the views of prophets who lived so many ages before Christ by those of religious teachers who enjoy the inherited experience of two millenniums of Christianity. Thus much is plainly taught us by Christ Himself, and there perhaps we might be content to leave the question. But we are compelled to ask, Do we not too much form all our judgments of the Scripture narratives on *a priori* traditions and unreasoned prejudices? Can we with adequate knowledge and honest conviction declare our certainty that this scene of destruction ever occurred as a literal fact? If we turn to any of the great students and critics of Germany, to whom we are indebted for the floods of light which their researches have thrown on the sacred page, they with almost consentient voice regard these details of this story as legendary. There is indeed every reason to believe the account of Ahaziah's accident, of his sending to consult the oracle of Baal-

Zebub, of the turning back of his messengers by Elijah, and of the menace which he heard from the prophet's lips. But the calling down of lightning to consume his captains and soldiers to ashes belongs to the cycle of Elijah-traditions preserved in the schools of the prophets; and in the case of miracles so startling and to our moral sense so repellent—miracles which assume the most insensate folly on the part of the king, and the most callous ruthlessness on the part of the prophet—the question may be fairly asked, Is there any proof, is there anything beyond dogmatic assertion to convince us, that we were intended to accept them *au pied de la lettre*? May they not be the formal vehicle chosen for the illustration of the undoubted powers and righteous mission of Elijah as the upholder of the worship of Jehovah? In a literature which abounds, as all Eastern literature abounds, in vivid and concrete methods of indicating abstract truths, have we any cogent proof that the supernatural details, of which some may have been introduced into these narratives by the scribes in the schools of the prophets, were not, in some instances, *meant* to be regarded as imaginative apologues? The most orthodox divines, both Jewish and Christian, have not hesitated to treat the Book of Jonah as an instance of the use of fiction for purposes of moral and spiritual edification. Were any critic to maintain that the story of the destruction of Ahaziah's emissaries belongs to the same class of narratives, I do not know how he could be refuted, however much he might be denounced by stereotyped prejudice and ignorance. I do not, however, myself regard the story as a mere parable composed to show how awful was the power of the prophets, and how fearfully it might be exercised. I look upon it rather

as possibly the narrative of some event which has been imaginatively embellished, and intermingled with details which we call supernatural.[1] Circumstances which we consider natural would be regarded as directly miraculous by an Eastern enthusiast, who saw in every event the immediate act of Jehovah to the exclusion of all secondary causes, and who attributed every ocurrence of life to the intervention of those "millions of spiritual creatures," who

> "walk the earth
> Unseen both when we wake and when we sleep."

If such a supposition be correct and admissible—and assuredly it is based on all that we increasingly learn of the methods of Eastern literature, and of the forms in which religious ideas were inculcated in early ages —then all difficulties are removed. We are not dealing with the mercilessness of a prophet, or the wielding of Divine powers in a manner which higher revelation condemns, but only with the well-known fact that the Elijah-spirit was not the Christ-spirit, and that the scribes of Ramah or Gilgal, and "the men of the tradition" and the "men of letters" who lived at Jabez, when they used the methods of Targum and Haggadah in handing down the stories of the prophets, had not received that full measure of enlightenment which came only when the Light of the World had shone.[2]

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[1] For the *idea* involved see Num. xi. 1; Deut. iv. 24; Psalm xxi. 9; Isa. xxvi. 11; Heb. x. 27, etc.

[2] 1 Chron. ii. 55, where "Shimeathites" means "men of the tradition," and "scribes," "men of letters."

CHAPTER II

THE ASCENSION OF ELIJAH

2 KINGS ii. 1—18

Ἠλίας ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἠφανίσθη, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἔγνω μεχρὶς τῆς σήμερον αὐτοῦ τὴν τελεύτην.—JOS., *Antt.*, IX. ii. 2.

Γεγόνασιν ἀφανεῖς, θάνατον δὲ αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς οἶδεν.—ST. EPHRÆM SYRUS.

THE date of the assumption of Elijah is wholly uncertain, and it becomes still more so because of the confusion of chronological order which results from the composite character of the records here collected. It appears from various scattered notices that Elijah lived on till the reign of Jehoram of Judah, whereas the narrative in this chapter is placed before the death of Jehoshaphat.

When the time came that "Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven," the prophet had a prevision of his approaching end, and determined for the last time to visit the hills of his native Gilead. The story of his end, though not written in rhythm, is told in a style of the loftiest poetry, resembling other ancient poems in its simple and solemn repetitions. On his way to Gilead, Elijah desires to visit ancient sanctuaries where schools of the prophets were now established, and accompanied by Elisha, whose faithful ministrations he had enjoyed for ten almost silent years, he went to Gilgal. This was not the Gilgal in

the Jordan valley so famous in the days of Joshua,[1] but *Jiljilia* in the hills of Ephraim,[2] where many young prophets were in course of training.[3]

Knowing that he was on his way to death, Elijah felt the imperious instinct which leads the soul to seek solitude at the supreme crises of life. He would have preferred that even Elisha should leave him, and he bade him stop at Gilgal, because the Lord had sent him as far as Bethel. But Elisha was determined to see the end, and exclaimed with strong asseveration, "As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

So they went on to Bethel, where there was another school of prophets, under the immediate shadow of Jeroboam's golden calf, though we are not told whether they continued the protest of the old nameless seer from Judah, or not.[4] Here the youths of the college came respectfully to Elisha—for they were prevented by a sense of awe from addressing Elijah—and asked him "whether he knew that that day God would take away his master." "Yes, I know it," he answers; but—for this is no subject for idle talk—"hold ye your peace."

Once more Elijah tries to shake off the attendance of his friend and disciple. He bids him stay at Bethel, since Jehovah has sent him on to Jericho. Once more Elisha repeats his oath that he will not leave him,

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[1] Josh. iv. 19; v. 9, 10.

[2] Deut. xi. 30. It is on a hill south-west of Shiloh (*Seilun*), near the road to Jericho (Hos. iv. 15; Amos iv. 4). The name means "a circle," and there may have been an ancient circle of sacred stones there.

[3] 2 Kings iv. 38.

[4] 1 Kings xiii.

and once more the sons of the prophets at Jericho, who warn him of what is coming, are told to say no more.

But little of the journey now remains. In vain Elijah urges Elisha to stay at Jericho; they proceed to Jordan. Conscious that some great event is impending, and that Elijah is leaving these scenes for ever, fifty of the sons of the prophets watch the two as they descend the valley to the river. Here they saw Elijah take off his mantle of hair, roll it up, and smite the waters with it. The waters part asunder, and the prophets pass over dry-shod.[1] As they crossed over Elijah asks Elisha what he should do for him, and Elisha entreats that a double portion of Elijah's spirit may rest upon him. By this he does not mean to ask for twice Elijah's power and inspiration, but only for an elder son's portion, which was twice what was inherited by the younger sons.[2] "Thou hast asked a hard thing," said Elijah; "but if thou seest me when I am taken hence, it shall be so."

The sequel can be only told in the words of the text: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire,

[1] As there are fords at Jericho, the object of this miracle, as of the one subsequently ascribed to Elisha, is not self-evident. Nothing is more certain than that there is a Divine economy in the exercise of supernatural powers. The pomp and prodigality of superfluous portents belong, not to Scripture, but to the *Acta sanctorum*, and the saint-stories of Arabia and India.

[2] Deut. xxi. 17. The Hebrew is פִּי־שְׁנַיִם, "a mouthful, or ration of two." Comp. Gen. xliii. 34. Even Ewald's "*Nur Zweidrittel und auch diese kaum*" is too strong (*Gesch.*, iii. 517). In no sense was Elisha greater than Elijah: he wrought more wonders, but he left little of his teaching, and produced on the mind of his nation a far less strong impression.

and horses of fire,[1] and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, 'My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!'[2] And he saw him no more."

Respecting the manner in which Elijah ended his earthly career, we know nothing beyond what is conveyed by this splendid narrative. His death, like that of Moses, was surrounded by mystery and miracles, and we can say nothing further about it. The question must still remain unanswered for many minds whether it was intended by the prophetic annalists for literal history, for spiritual allegory, or for actual events bathed in the colourings of an imagination to which the providential assumed the aspect of the supernatural.[3] We are twice told that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,"[4] and in that storm—which would have seemed a fit scene for the close of a career of storm—God, in the high poetry of the Psalmist, may have made the winds His angels, and the flames of fire His ministers. For us it must suffice to say of Elijah,

[1] In 2 Kings vi. 17 the stormblast (*sā'ārāh*) and chariots and horses of fire are part of a vision of the Divine protection. Comp. Isa. lxvi. 15; Job xxxviii. 1; Nah. i. 3; Psalms xviii. 6–15, civ. 3.

[2] That is, the protection and defence of Israel by thy prayers.

[3] Even the Church-father St. Ephræm Syrus evidently felt some misgivings. He says: "Suddenly there came from the height a storm of fire, and in the midst of the flame the form of a chariot and horses, and parted them both asunder; the one of them it left on the earth, the other it carried to the height; but whether the wind carried him, or in what place it left him, the Scripture has not informed us, but it says that after some years, a terrifying letter from him full of menaces, was delivered to King Jehoram of Judah" (quoted by Keil *ad loc.*) See 2 Chron. xxi. 12. The letter is called "a writing" (*miktâb*).

[4] 2 Kings ii. 11; Ecclus. xlviii. 12. The LXX. curiously says *ἐν συσσεισμῷ ὡς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν*. So too the Rabbis, *Sucah*, f. 5.

as the Book of Genesis says of Enoch, that "he was not, for God took him."

Elisha signalised the removal of his master by a burst of natural grief. He seized his garments and rent them in twain. Elijah had dropped his mantle of skin, and his grieving disciple took it with him as a priceless relic.[1] The legendary St. Antony bequeathed to St. Athanasius the only thing which he had, his sheep-skin mantle; and in the mantle of Elijah his successor inherited his most characteristic and almost his sole possession. He returned to Jordan, and with this mantle he smote the waters as Elijah had done. At first they did not divide;[2] but when he exclaimed, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah, even He?" they parted hither and thither. Seeing the portent, the sons of the prophets came with humble prostrations, and acknowledged him as their new leader.

They were not, however, satisfied with what they had seen, or had heard from Elisha, of the departure of the great prophet, and begged leave to send fifty strong men to search whether the wind of the Lord had not swept him away to some mountain or valley. Elisha at first refused, but afterwards yielded to their persistent importunity. They searched for three days among the hills of Gilead, but found him not, either living or dead, as Elisha had warned them would be the case.

From that time forward Elijah has taken his place in all Jewish and Mohammedan legends as the mysterious and deathless wanderer. Malachi spoke of him as

[1] The circumstance has left its trace in the proverbs of nations, and in the German word *Mantelkind* for a spiritual successor.

[2] 2 Kings ii. 14. LXX., καὶ οὐ διῃρέθη; Vulg., *Percussit aquas, et non sunt divisæ.*

destined to appear again to herald the coming of the Messiah,[1] and Christ taught His disciples that John the Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elijah. In Jewish legend he often appears and disappears. A chair is set for him at the circumcision of every Jewish child. At the Paschal feast the door is set open for him to enter. All doubtful questions are left for decision until he comes again. To the Mohammedans he is known as the wonder-working and awful El Khudr.[2]

Elisha is mentioned but once in all the later books of Scripture; but Elijah is mentioned many times, and the son of Sirach sums up his greatness when he says: "Then stood up Elias as fire, and his word burned like a torch. O Elias, how wast thou honoured in thy wondrous deeds! and who may glory like unto thee—who anointed kings to take revenge, and prophets to succeed after him—who wast ordained for reproof in their times, to pacify the wrath of the Lord's judgment before it broke forth into fury, and to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob! Blessed are they that saw thee and slept in love; for we shall surely live!"

[1] Mal. iv. 4-6.

[2] *Bava-Metzia*, f. 37, 2, etc. His name is used for incantations in the Kabbala. *Kitsur Sh'lh*, f. 71, 1 (Hershon, *Talmudic Miscellany*, p. 340). The chair set for him is called "the throne of Elijah." For many Rabbinic legends see Hershon, *Treasures of the Talmud*, pp. 172–178. The Persians regard him as the teacher of Zoroaster.

CHAPTER III

ELISHA

2 KINGS ii. 1—25

"He did wonders in his life, and at death even his works were marvellous. For all this the people repented not."—ECCLUS. xlviii. 14, 15.

AT this point we enter into the cycle of supernatural stories, which gathered round the name of Elisha in the prophetic communities. Some of them are full of charm and tenderness; but in some cases it is difficult to point out their intrinsic superiority over the ecclesiastical miracles with which monkish historians have embellished the lives of the saints. We can but narrate them as they stand, for we possess none of the means for critical or historical analysis which might enable us to discriminate between essential facts and accidental elements.

We see at once that the figure of Elisha[1] is far less impressive than that of Elijah. He inspires less of awe and terror. He lives far more in cities and amid the ordinary surroundings of civilised life. The honour with which he was treated was the honour of respect and admiration for his kindliness. He plays his part in no stupendous scenes like those at Carmel and at Horeb, and nearly all his miracles were miracles of

[1] The name Elisha means "My God is salva 'on."

mercy. Other remarkable differences are observable in the records of Elijah and Elisha. In the case of the former his main work was the opposition to Baal-worship; but although Baal-worship still prevailed (2 Kings x. 18–27) we read of no protests raised by Elisha against it. "With him"—perhaps it should be more accurately said, in the narrative which tells us of him—"the miracles are everything, the prophetic work nothing." The conception of a prophet's mission in these stories of him differs widely from that which dominates the splendid *midrash* of Elijah.

His separate career began with an act of beneficence. He had stopped for a time at Jericho. The curse of the rebuilding of the town upon a site which Joshua had devoted to the ban had expended itself on Hiel, its builder. It was now a flourishing city, and the home of a large school of prophets. But though the situation was pleasant as "a garden of the Lord,"[1] the water was bad, and the land "miscarried." In other words, the deleterious spring caused diseases among the inhabitants, and caused the trees to cast their fruit. So the men of the city came to Elisha, and humbly addressing him as "my lord," implored his help. He told them to bring him a new cruse full of salt, and going with it to the fountain cast it into the springs, proclaiming in Jehovah's name that they were healed, and that there should be no more death or miscarrying land. The gushing waters of the Ain-es-Sultân, fed by the spring of Quarantania, are to this day pointed out as the Fountains of Elisha, as they have been since the days of Josephus.[2]

The anecdote of this beautiful interposition to help

[1] Gen. xiii. 10. "The city of palms" (Deut. xxxiv. 3).

[2] Jos., *B. J.*, IV. viii. 3; Robinson, *Bibl. Researches*, i. 554.

a troubled city is followed by one of the stories which naturally repel us more than any other in the Old Testament. Elisha, on leaving Jericho, returned to Bethel, and as he climbed through the forest up the ascent leading to the town through what is now called the Wady Suweinît, a number of young lads—with the rudeness which in boys is often a venial characteristic of their gay spirits or want of proper training, and which to this day is common among boys in the East—laughed at him, and mocked him with the cry "Go up, round-head! go up, round-head!"[1] What struck these ill-bred and irreverent youngsters was the contrast between the rough hair-skin garb and unkempt shaggy locks of Elijah, "the lord of hair," and the smooth civilised aspect and shorter hair of his disciple. If the word *quereach* means "bald"[2] we see an additional reason for their ill-mannered jeers, since baldness was a cause of reproach and suspicion in the East, where it is comparatively rare. No doubt, too, the conduct of these young scoffers was the more offensive, and even the more wicked, because of the deeper reverence for age which prevails in Eastern countries, and above all because Elisha was known as a prophet. Perhaps, too, if some other reading lies behind the ἐλίθαζον of one MS. of the Septuagint, they pelted him with

[1] Abarbanel's notion that they meant "Ascend to heaven as Elijah did" is absurd.

[2] קֹרֵחַ. This means bald at the back of the head, as גִּבֵּחַ (*gibbeach*), means "forehead-bald" (Ewald, iii. 512). Elisha could not have been bald from old age, since he lived on for nearly sixty years, and must have been a young man. Baldness involved a suspicion of leprosy, and was disliked by Easterns (Lev. xxi. 5, xiii. 43; Isa. iii. 17, 24, xv. 2), as much as by the Romans (Suet., *Jul. Cæs.*, 45; *Domit.*, 18). Elisha's prophetic activity lasted through the reigns of Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash (*i.e.*, 12 + 28 + 17 + 2 years).

stones.[1] That Elisha should have rebuked them, and that seriously—that he should even have inflicted some punishment upon them to reform their manners—would have been natural; but we cannot repress the shudder with which we read the verse, "And he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty-and-two children of them." Surely the punishment was disproportionate to the offence! Who could doom so much as a single rude boy, not to speak of forty-two, to a horrible and agonising death for shouting after any one? It is the chief exception to the general course of Elisha's compassionate interpositions. Here, too, we must leave the narrative where it is; but we hold it quite admissible to conjecture that the incident, in some form or other, really occurred—that the boys were insolent, and that some of them may have been killed by the wild beasts which at that time abounded in Palestine—and yet that the *nuances* of the story which cause deepest offence to us may have suffered from some corruption of the tradition in the original records, and may admit of being represented in a slightly different form.

After this Elisha went for a time to the ancient haunts of his master on Mount Carmel, and thence returned to Samaria, the capital of his country, which he seems to have chosen for his most permanent dwelling-place.

[1] The *κατέπαιζον* of the Vat. LXX. implies persistent and vehement insult. The Post-Mishnic Rabbis, however, say that Elisha was punished with sickness for this deed (*Bava-Metzia*, f. 87, 1).

CHAPTER IV

THE INVASION OF MOAB

2 KINGS iii. 4—27

"What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not, what resolution from despair."
MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, i. 190.

AHAZIAH, as Elijah had warned him, never recovered from the injuries received in his fall through the lattice, and after his brief and luckless reign died without a child. He was succeeded by his brother Jehoram ("Jehovah is exalted"), who reigned for twelve years.[1]

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[1] There are great difficulties in the statement (2 Kings iii. 1) that he began to reign in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat. I have not entered, nor shall I enter, into the minute and precarious conjectures necessitated by the uncertainties and contradictions of this synchronism introduced into the narrative by some editor. Suffice it that with the aid of the Assyrian records we have certain *points de repère*, from which we can, with the assistance of the historian, conjecturally restore the main data. In the dates given at the head of the chapters I follow Kittel, as a careful inquirer. Some of the approximately fixed dates are (see Appendix I.):—

854. Battle of Karkar (Ahab and Benhadad against Shalmaneser II.)
738. Tribute of Menahem to Tiglath-Pileser II.
732. Fall of Damascus.
722. Capture of Samaria by Sargon.
720. Defeat of Sabaco by Sargon in battle of Raphia.
705. Accession of Sennacherib.
701. Campaign against Hezekiah.
608. Death of Josiah.

Jehoram began well. Though it is said that he did "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," we are told that he was not so guilty as his father or his mother. He did not, of course, abolish the worship of Jehovah under the cherubic symbol of the calves; no king of Israel thought of doing that, and so far as we know neither Elijah, nor Elisha, nor Jonah, nor Micaiah, nor any genuine prophet of Israel before Hosea, ever protested against that worship, which was chiefly disparaged by prophets of Judah like Amos and the nameless seer.[1] But Jehoram at least removed the *Matstsebah* or stone obelisk which had been reared in Baal's honour in front of his temple by Ahab, or by Jezebel in his name.[2] In this direction, however, his reformation must have been exceedingly partial, for until the sweeping measures taken by Jehu the temple and images of Baal still continued to exist in Samaria under his very eyes, and must have been connived at if not approved.

The first great measure which occupied the thoughts of Jehoram was to subdue the kingdom of Moab, which had been restored to independence by the bravery of the great pastoral-king Mesha;[3] or at any rate to avenge the series of humiliating defeats which Mesha had inflicted on his brother Ahaziah. A war of forty years' duration[4] had ended in the complete success of Moab. The loss ot a tribute of the fleeces of one

[1] But neither the man of God from Judah nor Amos directly denounce the calf-worship, so much as its concomitant sins and irregularities.

[2] Perhaps the true reading is "pillars" (LXX., Vulg., Arab.).

[3] He is called "a sheep-master," *noked*; LXX., *νωκηδ*. Elsewhere the word occurs only in Amos i. 1. The Alex. LXX. has *ἦν φέρων φόρον*.

[4] According to the Moabite Stone.

hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand rams was too serious to be lightly faced.[1] Jehoram laid his plans well. First he ordered a muster of all the men of war throughout his kingdom, and then appealed for the co-operation of Jehoshaphat and his vassal-king of Edom. Both kings consented to join him. Jehoshaphat had already been the victim of a powerful and wanton aggression on the part of King Mesha,[2] from which he had been delivered by the panic of his foes in the Valley of Salt. Though the king of Edom had, on that occasion, been an ally of Mesha, the forces of Edom had fallen the first victims of that internecine panic. Both Judah and Edom, therefore, had grave wrongs to avenge, and eagerly seized the opportunity to humble the growing pride of the people of Chemosh. The attack was wisely arranged. It was determined to advance against Moab from the south, through the territory of Edom, by a rough and mountainous track, and, as far as possible, to take the nation by surprise. The combined host took a seven days' circuit round the south of the Dead Sea, hoping to find an abundant supply of water in the stream which flows through the Wady-el-Ahsa, which separates Edom from Moab.[3] But owing to recent droughts the Wady was waterless, and the armies, with their horses, suffered all the agonies of thirst. Jehoram gave way

[1] It is not clear whether the lambs and rams were sent with the fleeces. The A.V. says "lambs and rams with their wool," in accordance with Josephus—*μυριάδας εἴκοσι προβάτων σὺν τοῖς πόκοις*. The LXX. has the vague *ἐπὶ πόκων*, and implies that this was a special fine after a defeat in the revolt (*ἐν τῇ ἐπαναστάσει*): but comp. Isa. xvi. 1.

[2] 2 Chron. xx. 1–30.

[3] Robinson (*Bibl. Res.*, ii. 157) identifies it with the brook *Zered*. Deut. ii. 13; Num. xxi. 12. The name means "valley of water-pits." W. R. Smith quotes Doughty, *Travels*, i. 26.

to despair, bewailing that Jehovah should have brought together these three kings to deliver them a helpless prey into the hands of Moab. But the pious Jehoshaphat at once thinks of "inquiring of the Lord" by some true prophet, and one of Jehoram's courtiers informs him that no less a person than Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who had been the attendant of Elijah, is with the host.[1] We are surprised to find that his presence in the camp had excited so little attention as to be unknown to the king;[2] but Jehoshaphat, on hearing his name, instantly acknowledged his prophetic inspiration. So urgent was the need, and so deep the sense of Elisha's greatness, that the three kings in person went on an embassy "to the servant of him who ran before the chariot of Ahab." Their humble appeal to him produced so little elation in his mind that, addressing Jehoram, who was the most powerful, he exclaimed, with rough indignation: "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father,"—nominal prophets of Jehovah, who will say to thee smooth things and prophesy deceits, as four hundred of them did to Ahab—"and to the Baal-prophets of thy mother." Instead of resenting this

[1] Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 7. The phrase "who poured water on the hands of Elijah" is a touch of Oriental custom which the traveller in remote parts of Palestine may still often see. Once, when driven by a storm into the house of the Sheykh of a tribe which had a rather bad reputation for brigandage, I was most hospitably entertained; and the old white-haired Sheykh, his son, and ourselves were waited on by the grandson, a magnificent youth, who immediately after the meal brought out an old richly chased ewer and basin, and poured water over our hands, soiled by eating out of the common dish, of course without spoons or forks.

[2] This seems to have struck Josephus (*Antt.*, IX. iii. 1), who says that "he *chanced* to be in a tent (ἔτυχε κατεσκηνωκώς) outside the host.

scant respect Jehoram, in utmost distress, deprecated the prophet's anger, and appealed to his pity for the peril of the three armies. But Elisha is not mollified. He tells Jehoram that but for the presence of Jehoshaphat he would not so much as look at him: so completely was the destiny of the people mixed up with the character of their kings! Out of respect for Jehoshaphat Elisha will do what he can. But all his soul is in a tumult of emotion. For the moment he can do nothing. He needs to be calmed from his agitation by the spell of music, and bids them send a minstrel to him. The harper came, and as Elisha listened his soul was composed, and "the hand of the Lord came upon him" to illuminate and inspire his thoughts.[1] The result was that he bade them dig trenches in the dry wady, and promised that, though they should see neither wind nor rain, the valley should be filled with water to quench the thirst of the fainting armies, their horses and their cattle. After this God would also deliver the Moabites into their hand; and they were bidden to smite the cities, fell the trees, stop the wells, and mar the smiling pasture-lands, which constituted the wealth of Moab, with stones. That the hosts of Judah and Israel and jealous Edom should be prone to afflict this awfully devastating vengeance on a power by which they had been so severely defeated on past occasions, and on which they had so many wrongs and blood-feuds to avenge, was natural; but it is surprising to find a prophet of the Lord giving the commission to ruin the gifts of God and spoil the innocent labours of man, and thus to inflict misery on generations yet unborn.

[1] Comp. 1 Sam. x. 5; 1 Chron. xxv. 1; Ezek. i. 3, xxxiii. 22. *Menaggēn* is one who plays on a stringed instrument, *n'gināh*. The Pythagoreans used music in the same way (Cic., *Tusc. Disp.*, iv. 2).

The behest is directly contrary to rules of international war which have prevailed even between non-Christian nations, among whom the stopping or poisoning of wells and the cutting down of fruit trees has been expressly forbidden. It is also against the rules of war laid down in Deuteronomy.[1] Such, however, was the command attributed to Elisha; and, as we shall see, it was fulfilled, and seems to have led to disastrous consequences.

Cheered by the promise of Divine aid which the prophet had given them, the host retired to rest. The next morning at day-dawn, when the *minchah* of fine flour, oil, and frankincense was offered,[2] water, which, according to the tradition of Josephus, had fallen at three days' distance on the hills of Edom, came flowing from the south and filled the wady with its refreshing streams.

The incident itself is highly instructive. It throws light both upon the general accuracy of the ancient narrative, and on the fact that events to which a directly supernatural colouring is given are, in many instances, not so much supernatural as providential. The deliverance of Israel was due, not to a portent wrought by Elisha, but to the pure wisdom which he derived from the inspiration of God. When the counsels of princes were of none effect, and for lack of the spirit of counsel the people were perishing, his mind alone, illuminated by a wisdom from on high, saw what was the right step to take. He bade the soldiers dig trenches in the dry torrent bed,—which was the very step most likely to ensure their deliverance from the torment of thirst, and which would be done under similar circumstances to

[1] Deut. xx. 19, 20.

[2] Lev. ii. 1. Comp. 1 Kings xviii. 36.

this day. They saw neither wind nor rain; but there had been a storm among the farther hills, and the swollen watercourses discharged their overflow into the trenches of the wady which were ready prepared for them, and offered the path of least resistance.

Moab, meanwhile, had heard of the advance of the three kings through the territories of Edom. The whole military population had mustered in arms, and stood on the frontier, on the other side of the dry wady, to oppose the invasion. For they knew this would be a struggle of life and death, and that if defeated they would have no mercy to expect. When the sun rose, and its first rays burned on the wady, which had been dry on the previous evening, the water which, unknown to the Moabites, had filled the trenches in the night, looked red as blood. Doubtless it may have been stained, as Ewald says, by the red soil which gave its name to the red land of the "red king, Edom"; but as it gleamed under the dawn the Moabites thought that those seemingly crimson pools had been filled with the blood of their enemies, who had fallen by each other's swords. Their own recent experience when Jehoshaphat met them in the Valley of Salt showed them how easy it was for temporary allies to be seized by panic, and to fight among themselves.[1]

The army of their invaders was composed of heterogeneous and mutually conflicting elements. Between Israel and Judah there had been nearly a century of war,[2] and only a brief reunion; and Edom, recently the willing and natural ally of Moab, was not likely to fight very zealously for Judah, which had reduced her to vassalage. So the Moabites said to one another,

[1] This dreadful result crippled the revolt of Vindex against Nero.

[2] Jeroboam I., B.C. 937; Joram, 854.

as they pointed to the unexpected apparition of those red pools: "This is blood. The kings are surely destroyed, and they have smitten each man his fellow. Moab to the spoil!" They rushed down tumultuously on the camp of Israel, and found the soldiers of Jehoram ready to receive them. Taken by surprise, for they had expected no resistance, they were hurled back in utter confusion and with immense slaughter. The three kings pushed their advantage to the utmost. They went forward into the land, driving and smiting the Moabites before them, and ruthlessly carrying out the command attributed to Elisha. They beat down the cities—most of which in a land of flocks and herds were little more than pastoral villages; they rendered the green fields useless with stones; they filled up all the wells with earth; they felled every fruit-bearing tree of any value. At last only one stronghold, Kir-haraseth, the chief fenced town of Moab, held out against them.[1] Even this fortress was sore bested. The slingers, for which Israel, and specially the tribe of Benjamin, was so famous, advanced to drive its defenders from the battlements. King Mesha fought with undaunted heroism. He decided to take the seven hundred warriors who were left to him, and cut his way through the besieging host to the king of Edom. He thought that even now he might persuade the Edomites to abandon this new and unnatural alliance, and turn the battle against their common

[1] Isa. xv. 1, Kir of Moab; Jer. xlviii. 31, Kir-heres. It is built on a steep calcareous rock, surrounded by a deep, narrow glen, which thence descends westward to the Dead Sea, under the name of the Wady Kerak. We know that the armies of Nineveh habitually practised these brutal modes of devastation in the districts which they conquered. See Layard, *passim*; Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, ii. 84.

enemies. But the numbers against him were too strong, and he found the plan impossible. Then he formed a dreadful resolution, dictated to him by the extremity of his despair. His inscription at Karcha shows that he was a profound and even fanatical believer in Chemosh, his god. Chemosh could still deliver him. If Chemosh was, as Mesha says in his inscription, "angry with his land"—if, even for a time, he allowed his faithful people and his devoted king to be afflicted—it could not be for any lack of power on his part, but only because they had in some way offended him, so that he was wroth, or because he had gone on a journey, or was asleep, or deaf.[1] How could he be appeased? Only by the offering of the most precious of all the king's possessions; only by the self-devotion of the crown-prince, on whom were centred all the nation's hopes. Mesha would force Chemosh to help him for very shame. He would offer to Chemosh a human sacrifice, the sacrifice of his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead. Doubtless the young prince gave himself up as a willing offering, for that was essential to the holocaust being valid and acceptable.[2]

So upon the wall of Kir-haraseth, in the sight of all the Moabites, and of the three invading armies, the brave and desperate hero of a hundred fights, who had inflicted so many reverses upon these enemies, and received so many at their hands, but who, having liberated his country, now saw all the efforts of his life ruined at one blow—took his eldest son, kindled the

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 27. Comp. Psalm xxxv. 23, xliv. 23, lxxxiii. 1, etc.

[2] Comp. Micah vi. 7. This is an entirely different incident from that alluded to in Amos ii. 1.

sacrificial fire, and then and there solemnly offered that horrible burnt-offering.[1]

And it proved effectual, though far otherwise than Mesha had expected. He was delivered; and, doubtless, if ever he reared, at Kirharaseth or elsewhere, another memorial stone, he would have attributed his deliverance to his national god. But here, in the annals of Elisha, the result is hurried over, and a veil is, so to speak, dropped upon the dreadful scene with the one ambiguous expression, "And there was great wrath against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land."

The phrase awakens but does not satisfy our curiosity. We are not certain of the translation, or of the meaning. It may be, as in the margin of the Revised Version, "there came great wrath upon Israel."[2] But wrath from whom? and on what account? The word "wrath" all but invariably denotes divine wrath; but we cannot imagine (as some critics do) that any Israelite of the schools of the prophets would sanction the notion that the chosen people were allowed to suffer from the kindled wrath of Chemosh. Can we then suppose that the desperate act of King Mesha was a proof that Israel, who was no doubt the most interested and the most remorseless of the invaders, had pressed the Moabites too hard, and carried his vengeance much too far? That is by no means impossible. The prophet Amos denounces upon Moab in after years

[1] Eusebius (*Præp. Evang.*, iv. 16) quotes from Philo's Phœnician history a reference to human sacrifices (*τοῖς τιμωροῖς δαίμοσιν*) at moments of desperation.

[2] The rendering is doubtful. LXX., *καὶ ἐγένετο μετάμελος μέγας ἐπὶ Ἰσράηλ*; Vulg., indignatio *in* Israel; Luther, *Da ward Israel sehr zornig.*

the doom that fire should devour the palaces of Kirioth, and that Moab should perish with shoutings, and all his royal line be cut off, for the far less offence of having burned into lime the bones of the king of Edom.[1] The command of Elisha did not exempt the Israelites from their share of moral responsibility. Jehu was commissioned to be an executioner of vengeance upon the house of Ahab. Yet Jehu is expressly condemned by the prophet Hosea for the tiger-like ferocity and horrible thoroughness with which he had carried out his destined work.[2] Only one other explanation is possible. If "wrath" here has the unusual sense of human indignation, the clause can only imply that the armies of Judah and Edom were roused to anger by the unpitying spirit which Israel had displayed. The horrible tragedy enacted upon the wall of Kirharaseth awoke their consciences to the sense of human compassion. These, after all, were fellow-men—fellow-men of kindred blood to their own—whom they had driven to straits so frightful as to cause a king to burn his own heir alive as a mute appeal to his god in the hour of overwhelming ruin. They had done enough:

"Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt."

They hastily broke up the league, dissolved the alliance, returned horror-stricken to their own land. They left Moab indeed in possession of his last fortress, but they had reduced his territory to a wilderness before they retired and called it peace.

[1] Amos ii. 1–3.

[2] Hos. i. 4: "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu."

CHAPTER V

ELISHA'S MIRACLES

2 KINGS iv. 1—44

WE are now in the full tide of Elisha's miracles, and as regards many of them we can do little more than illustrate the text as it stands. The record of them clearly comes from some account prevalent in the schools of the prophets, which is however only fragmentary, and has been unchronologically pieced into the annals of the kings of Israel.

The story of Elisha abounds far more in the supernatural than that of Elijah, and is believed by most critics to be of earlier date. Yet the scenes and portents of his life are almost wholly lacking in the element of grandeur which belong to those of the elder seer. His personality, if on the whole softer and more beneficent, inspires less of awe, and the whole tone of the biography which recorded these isolated incidents is lacking in the poetic and impassioned elevation which marks the episodes of Elijah's history. We see in the records of Elisha, as in the biographies—so rich in prodigies—of fourth-century hermits and mediæval saints, how little impressive in itself is the exercise of abnormal powers; how it derives its sole grandeur from the accompaniment of great moral lessons and spiritual revelations. John the Baptist "did no miracle," yet

our Lord placed him not only far above Elisha, but even above Moses and Samuel and Elijah, when He said of him, "Verily I say unto you, of them that have been born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

It is impossible not to be struck with the singular parallelism between the powers exercised by Elisha and those which are attributed to his predecessor. "How true an heir is Elisha of his master," says Bishop Hall, "not in his graces only, but in his actions! Both of them divided the waters of Jordan, the one as his last act, the other as his first. Elijah's curse was the death of the captains and their troops; Elisha's curse was the death of the children. Elijah rebuked Ahab to his face; Elisha, Jehoram. Elijah supplied the drought of Israel by rain from heaven; Elisha supplied the drought of the three kings by waters gushing out of the earth; Elijah increased the oil of the Sareptan, Elisha increased the oil of the prophet's widow; Elijah raised from death the Sareptan's son, Elisha the Shunammite's; both of them had one mantle, one spirit; both of them climbed up one Carmel, one heaven." The resemblance, however, is not at all in character, but only in external and miraculous circumstances. In all other respects Elisha furnishes a contrast to Elijah which startles us quite as much as any superficial resemblances. Elijah was a free, wild Bedawy prophet, hating and shunning as his ordinary residence the abodes of men, making his home in the rocky wady or in the mountain glades, appearing and disappearing suddenly as the wind. He asserted his power most often in ministries of retribution. Clad in the sheepskin of a Gadite shepherd or mountaineer, he was not one of those who wear soft

clothing or are found in kings' houses. He usually met monarchs as their enemy and their reprover, but for the most part avoided them. He never intervened for years together even in national events of the utmost importance, whether military or religious, unless he received the direct call of God, or there appeared to him to be a "*dignus Vindice nodus.*" Elisha, on the other hand, makes his home in cities, and chiefly in Samaria. He is familiar with kings and moves about with armies, and has no long retirements into unknown solitudes; and though he could speak roughly to Jehoram, he is often on the friendliest terms with him and with other sovereigns.

The stories of Elisha give us many interesting glimpses into the social life of Israel in his day. As to their literal historic accuracy, those must make positive affirmation who feel that they can do so in accordance alike with adequate authority and with the sacredness of truth. Many will be unable to escape the opinion that they bear some resemblance to other Jewish haggadoth, written for edification, with every innocent intention, in the schools of the Prophets, but no more intended for perfectly literal acceptance in all their details than the Life of St. Paul the Hermit, by St. Jerome; or that of St. Antony, attributed erroneously to St. Athanasius; or that of St. Francis in the Fioretti; or the lives of humble saints of the people called *Kisar-el-anbiah*, which are so popular among poor Mohammedans. Into that question there is no need to enter further. *Abundet quisque in sensu suo.*

I. On one occasion a widow of one of the Sons of the Prophets—for these communities, though cœnobitic, were not celibate—came to him in deep distress. Her husband—the Jews, with their usual guesswork, most

improbably identify him with Obadiah, the chamberlain of Ahab[1]—had died insolvent. As she had nothing to pay, her creditor under the grim provision of the law was about to exercise his right of selling her two sons into slavery to recoup himself for the debt.[2] Would Elisha help her?

Prophets were never men of wealth, so that he could not pay her debt. He asked her what she possessed to satisfy the demand. "Nothing," she said, "but a pot of the common oil, used for anointing the body after a bath."

Elisha bade her go and borrow from her neighbours all the empty vessels she could, then to return home, shut the door, and pour the oil into the vessels.

She did so. They were all filled, and she asked her son to bring yet another. But there was not another to be had, so she went out and told the Man of God. He bade her sell the miraculously multiplied oil to pay the debt, and live with her sons on the proceeds of what was over.

II. We next find Elisha at Shunem, famous as the abode of the fair maiden—probably Abishag, the nurse of David's decrepitude—who is the heroine of the Song of Songs. It is a village, now called Solam, on the slopes of Little Hermon (Jebel-el-Duhy), three miles north of Jezreel. At this place there lived a lady of wealth and influence, whose husband owned the surrounding land. There were but few khans in Palestine, and even where they now exist the traveller has in most cases to supply his own food. Elisha, in his journeys to and fro among the schools of the Prophets,

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. iv. 2. This perhaps is only suggested by the reminiscences of 1 Kings xviii. 2, 3, 12.

[2] Lev. xxv. 39–41; Matt. xviii. 25.

had often enjoyed the welcome hospitality eagerly pressed upon him by the lady of Shunem. Struck with his sacred character, she persuaded her husband to take a step unusual even to the boundless hospitality of the East. She begged him to do honour to this holy Man of God by building for him a little chamber (*alîyah*) on the flat roof of the house, to which he might have easy and private access by the outside staircase.[1] The chamber was built, and furnished, like any other simple Eastern room, with a bed, a divan to sit on, a table, and a lamp; and there the weary prophet on his journeys often found a peaceful, simple, and delightful resting-place.

Grateful for the reverence with which she treated him, and the kind care with which she had supplied his needs, Elisha was anxious to recompense her in whatever way might be possible. The thought of money payment was of course out of the question: merely to hint at it would have been a breach of manners. But perhaps he might be of use to her in some other way. At this time, and for years afterwards during his long ministry of perhaps fifty-six years, he was attended by a servant named Gehazi, who stood to him in the same sort of relation which he had held to Elijah. He told Gehazi to summon the Shunammite lady. In the deep humility of Eastern womanhood she came and stood in his presence. Even then he did not address her. So downtrodden was the position of women in the East that any dignified person, much more a great prophet, could not converse with a woman without compromising his dignity. The more

[1] 2 Kings iv. 10. Not "a little chamber on the wall" (A.V.), but "an *aliyah* with walls" (margin, R.V.).

scrupulous Pharisees in the days of Christ always carefully gathered up their garments in the streets, lest they should so much as touch a woman with their skirts in passing by, as the modern Chakams in Jerusalem do to this day.[1] The disciples themselves, sophisticated by familiarity with such teachers, were astonished that Jesus at the well of Shechem should talk with a woman.[2] So, though the lady stood there, Elisha, instead of speaking to her directly, told Gehazi to thank her for all the devout respect and care, all 'the modesty of fearful duty,'[3] which she had displayed towards them, and to ask her if he should say a good word for her to the King or the Captain of the Host. This is just the sort of favour which an Eastern would be likely to value most.[4] The Shunammite, however, was well provided for; she had nothing to complain of, and nothing to request. She thanked Elisha for his kindly proposal, but declined it, and went away.

"Is there, then, nothing which we can do for her?" asked Elisha of Gehazi.[5]

There was. Gehazi had learnt that the sorrow of her life—a sorrow and a source of reproach to any Eastern household, but most of all to that of a wealthy householder—was her childlessness.

"Call her," he said.

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[1] Frankl., *Jews in the East.*

[2] John iv. 27: "Then came His disciples, and marvelled that He was *talking* (μετὰ γυναικὸς) *with a woman.*"

[3] 2 Kings iv. 13: "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care" (LXX., πᾶσαν τὴν ἔκστασιν ταύτην).

[4] The Sheykh with whom I stayed at Bint es Jebeil could think of no return which I could offer for his hospitality so acceptable as if I would say a good word for him to the authorities at Beyrout.

[5] Gehazi is usually called the *na'ar* or "lad" of Elisha—a term implying lower service than Elisha's "ministry" to Elijah.

She came back, and stood reverently in the doorway.

"When the time comes round," he said to her, "you shall embrace a son."

The promise raised in her heart a thrill of joy. It was too precious to be believed. "Nay," she said, "my lord, thou Man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid."

But the promise was fulfilled, and the lady of Shunem became the happy mother of a son.

III. The charming episode then passes over some years. The child had grown into a little boy, old enough now to go out alone to see his father in the harvest fields and to run about among the reapers. But as he played about in the heat he had a sunstroke, and cried to his father, "O my head, my head!" Not knowing how serious the matter was, his father simply ordered one of his lads to carry the child home to his mother. The fond mother nursed him tenderly upon her knees, but at noon he died.

Then the lady of Shunem showed all the faith and strength and wisdom of her character. "The good Shunammite," says Bishop Hall, "had lost her son; her faith she lost not." Overwhelming as was this calamity —the loss of an only child—she suppressed all her emotions, and, instead of bursting into the wild helpless wail of Eastern mourners, or rushing to her husband with the agonising news, she took the little boy's body in her arms, carried it up to the chamber which had been built for Elisha, and laid it upon his bed. Then, shutting the door, she called to her husband to send to her one of his reapers and one of the asses, for she was going quickly to the Man of God and would return in the cool of the evening. "Why should you go to-day particularly?" he asked. "It is neither new

moon, nor sabbath." "It is all right," she said;[1] and with perfect confidence in the rectitude of all her purposes, he sent her the she-ass, and a servant to drive it and to run beside it for her protection on the journey of sixteen miles.

"Drive on the ass," she said. "Slacken me not the riding unless I tell you." So with all possible speed she made her way—a journey of several hours—from Shunem to Mount Carmel.

Elisha, from his retreat on the hill, marked her coming from a distance, and it rendered him anxious. "Here comes the Shunammite," he said to Gehazi. "Run to meet her, and ask Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?"

"All well," she answered, for her message was not to Gehazi, and she could not trust her voice to speak; but pressing on up-hillwards, she flung herself before Elisha and grasped his feet. Displeased at the familiarity which dared thus to clasp the feet of his master, Gehazi ran up to thrust her away by force, but Elisha interfered. "Let her alone," he cried; "she is in deep affliction, and Jehovah has not revealed to me the cause." Then her long pent-up emotion burst forth. "Did I desire a son of my lord?" she cried. "Did I not say do not deceive me?"

It was enough—though she seemed unable to bring out the dreadful words that her boy was dead. Catching her meaning, Elisha said to Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, take my staff, and without so much as stopping to salute any one, or to return a salutation,[2] lay my staff on the dead child's face." But the broken-hearted

[1] 2 Kings iv. 23. Hebrew "Peace"; A.V., "It shall be well."

[2] Salutations occupy some time in the formally courteous East. Comp. Luke x. 4.

mother refused to leave Elisha. She imagined that the servant, the staff, might be severed from Elisha; but she knew that wherever the prophet was, there was power. So Elisha arose and followed her, and on the way Gehazi met them with the news that the child lay still and dead, with the fruitless staff upon his face.

Then Elisha in deep anguish went up to the chamber and shut the door, and saw the boy's body lying pale upon his bed. After earnest prayer he outstretched himself over the little corpse, as Elijah had done at Zarephath. Soon it began to grow warm with returning life, and Elisha, after pacing up and down the room, once more stretched himself over him. Then the child opened his eyes and sneezed seven times, and Elisha called to Gehazi to summon the mother.

"Take up thy son," he said. She prostrated herself at his feet in speechless gratitude, and took up her recovered child, and went.

IV We next find Elisha at Gilgal, in the time of the famine of which we read his prediction in a later chapter.[1] The sons of the prophets were seated round him, listening to his instructions; the hour came for their simple meal, and he ordered the great pot to be put on the fire for the vegetable soup, on which, with bread, they chiefly lived. One of them went out for herbs, and carelessly brought his outer garment (the *abeyah*)[2] full of wild poisonous coloquinths,[3] which, by ignorance or inadvertence, were shred into the pottage. But when it was cooked and poured out they perceived

[1] 2 Kings viii. 1.

[2] Not "lap," as in A.V. (Heb., *beged*); LXX. *συνέλιξε πλῆρες τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ*; Vulg., *implevit vestem suam* (both correctly).

[3] Heb., *paquoth*; LXX., *τολύπην ἀγρίαν*; Vulg., *colocynthidas agri.* Hence the name *cucumis prophetarum.*

the poisonous taste, and cried out, "O Man of God, death in the pot!"

"Bring meal," he said, for he seems always to have been a man of the fewest words.

They cast in some meal, and were all able to eat of the now harmless pottage. It has been noticed that in this, as in other incidents of the story, there is no invocation of the name of Jehovah.

V. Not far from Gilgal was the little village of Baalshalisha,[1] at which lived a farmer who wished to bring an offering of firstfruits and *karmel* (bruised grain) in his wallet to Elisha as a Man of God.[2] It was a poor gift enough—only twenty of the coarse barley loaves which were eaten by the common people, and a sack[3] full of fresh ears of corn.[4] Elisha told his servitor[5]—perhaps Gehazi—to set them before the people present. "What?" he asked, "this trifle of food before a hundred men!" But Elisha told him in the Lord's name that it should more than suffice; and so it did.

[1] Lord of the Chain and "Three lands." Three wadies meet a this spot, a little west of Bethel.

[2] 2 Kings iv. 42. Karmel, Lev. ii. 14. Perhaps a sort of frumenty.

[3] The word for "wallet" (*tsiqlon*; Vulg., *pera*) occurs here only. Peshito, "garment." The Vatican LXX. omits it. The Greek version has *ἐν κωρύκῳ αὐτοῦ*.

[4] See Lev. ii. 14, xxiii. 14.

[5] 2 Kings iv. 43. The word for "his servitor" (*m'chartho*) is used also of Joshua. It does not mean a mere ordinary attendant. LXX., λειτουργός; Vulg., *minister*.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF NAAMAN

2 KINGS v. 1—27

MATT. viii. 3: θέλω, καθαρίσθητι

AFTER these shorter anecdotes we have the longer episode of Naaman.[1]

A part of the misery inflicted by the Syrians on Israel was caused by the forays in which their light-armed bands, very much like the borderers on the marches of Wales or Scotland, descended upon the country and carried off plunder and captives before they could be pursued.

In one of these raids they had seized a little Israelitish girl and sold her to be a slave. She had been purchased for the household of Naaman, the captain of the Syrian host, who had helped his king and nation to win important victories either against Israel or against Assyria. Ancient Jewish tradition identified him with the man who had "drawn his bow at a venture" and slain King Ahab. But all Naaman's valour and rank and fame, and the honour felt for him by his king, were valueless to him, for he was suffering from the horrible affliction of leprosy. Lepers do not seem to

[1] It is curiously omitted by Josephus, though he mentions him (Ἀμανος) as the slayer of Ahab (*Antt.*, VIII. xv. 5). The name is an old Hebrew name (Num. xxvi. 40).

have been segregated in other countries so strictly as they were in Israel, or at any rate Naaman's leprosy was not of so severe a form as to incapacitate him from his public functions.

But it was evident that he was a man who had won the affection of all who knew him; and the little slave girl who waited on his wife breathed to her a passionate wish that Naaman could visit the Man of God in Samaria, for he would recover him from his leprosy. The saying was repeated, and one of Naaman's friends mentioned it to the king of Syria. Benhadad was so much struck by it that he instantly determined to send a letter, with a truly royal gift to the king of Israel, who could, he supposed, as a matter of course, command the services of the prophet. The letter came to Jehoram with a stupendous present of ingots of silver to the value of ten talents, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.[1] After the ordinary salutations, and a mention of the gifts, the letter continued "And now, when this letter is come to thee, behold I have sent Naaman my servant, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."

Jehoram lived in perpetual terror of his powerful and encroaching neighbour. Nothing was said in the letter about the Man of God; and the king rent his clothes, exclaiming that he was not God to kill and to make alive, and that this must be a base pretext for a quarrel. It never so much as occurred to him, as it certainly would have done to Jehoshaphat, that the prophet, who was so widely known and honoured, and whose mission had been so clearly attested in the invasion of Moab, might at least help him to face this

[1] The word *l'boosh* means a gala dress. Comp. v. 5; Gen. xlv. 22. χιτῶνες ἐπημοιβοί (Hom., *Od.*, xiv. 514). Comp. viii. 249.

problem. Otherwise the difficulty might indeed seem insuperable, for leprosy was universally regarded as an incurable disease.

But Elisha was not afraid: he boldly told Jehoram to send the Syrian captain to him. Naaman, with his horses and his chariots, in all the splendour of a royal ambassador, drove up to the humble house of the prophet. Being so great a man, he expected a deferential reception, and looked for the performance of his cure in some striking and dramatic manner. "The prophet," so he said to himself, "will come out, and solemly invoke the name of his God Jehovah, and wave his hand over the leprous limbs, and so work the miracle."[1]

But the servant of the King of kings was not exultantly impressed, as false prophets so often are, by earthly greatness. Elisha did not even pay him the compliment of coming out of the house to meet him. He wished to efface himself completely, and to fix the leper's thoughts on the one truth that if healing was granted to him, it was due to the gift of God, not to the thaumaturgy or arts of man. He simply sent out his servant to the Syrian commander-in-chief with the brief message, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and be thou clean."

Naaman, accustomed to the extreme deference of many dependants, was not only offended, but enraged, by what he regarded as the scant courtesy and procrastinated boon of the prophet. Why was he not received as a man of the highest distinction? What necessity could there be for sending him all the way to the Jordan? And why was he bidden to wash in that wretched, useless, tortuous stream, rather than in

[1] Elisha would not be likely to *touch* the place.

the pure and flowing waters of his own native Abanah and Pharpar?[1] How was he to tell that this "Man of God" did not design to mock him by sending him on a fool's errand, so that he would come back as a laughing-stock both to the Israelites and to his own people? Perhaps he had not felt any great faith in the prophet, to begin with; but whatever he once felt had now vanished. He turned and went away in a rage.

But in this crisis the affection of his friends and servants stood him in good stead. Addressing him, in their love and pity, by the unusual term of honour "my father," they urged upon him that, as he certainly would not have refused some *great* test, there was no reason why he should refuse this simple and humble one.

He was won over by their reasonings, and descending the hot steep valley of the Jordan, bathed himself in the river seven times. God healed him, and, as Elisha had promised, "his flesh," corroded by leprosy, "came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

This healing of Naaman is alluded to by our Lord to illustrate the truth that the love of God extended farther than the limits of the chosen race; that His Fatherhood is co-extensive with the whole family of man.

It is difficult to conceive the transport of a man cured of this most loathsome and humiliating of all earthly afflictions. Naaman, who seems to have possessed "a mind naturally Christian," was filled with gratitude. Unlike the thankless Jewish lepers whom Christ cured as He left Engannim, this alien returned

[1] Now the *Burâda* ("cold") and the Nahr-el-Awâj.

to give glory to God. Once more the whole imposing cavalcade rode through the streets of Samaria, and stopped at Elisha's door. This time Naaman was admitted into his presence. He saw, and no doubt Elisha had strongly impressed on him the truth, that his healing was the work not of man but of God; and as he had found no help in the deities of Syria, he confessed that the God of Israel was the only true God among those of the nations. In token of his thankfulness he presses Elisha, as God's instrument in the unspeakable mercy which has been granted to him, to accept "a blessing" (*i.e.*, a present) from him—"from thy servant," as he humbly styled himself.

Elisha was no greedy Balaam. It was essential that Naaman and the Syrians should not look on him as on some vulgar sorcerer who wrought wonders for "the rewards of divination." His wants were so simple that he stood above temptation. His desires and treasures were not on earth. To put an end to all importunity, he appealed to Jehovah with his usual solemn formula—"As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will receive no present."[1]

Still more deeply impressed by the prophet's incorruptible superiority to so much as a suspicion of low motives, Naaman asked that he might receive two mules' burden of earth wherewith to build an altar to the God of Israel of His own sacred soil.[2] The very

[1] Compare the answer of Abraham to the King of Sodom (Gen. xiv. 23.)

[2] The feeling which influenced Naaman is the same which led the Jews to build Nahardea in Persia of stones from Jerusalem. Altars were to be of earth (Exod. xx. 24), but no altar is mentioned in 2 Kings v. 17, and the LXX. does not even specify *earth* (γόμοι ζεύγος ἡμιόνων).

soil ruled by such a God must, he thought, be holier than other soil; and he wished to take it back to Syria, just as the people of Pisa rejoiced to fill their Campo Santo with mould from the Holy Land, and just as mothers like to baptize their children in water brought home from the Jordan. Henceforth, said Naaman, I will offer burnt-offering and sacrifice to no God but unto Jehovah. Yet there was one difficulty in the way. When the King of Syria went to worship in the temple of his god Rimmon it was the duty of Naaman to accompany him.[1] The king leaned on his hand, and when he bowed before the idol it was Naaman's duty to bow also. He begged that for this concession God would pardon him.

Elisha's answer was perhaps different from what Elijah might have given. He practically allowed Naaman to give this sign of outward compliance with idolatry, by saying to him, "Go in peace." It is from this circumstance that the phrase "to bow in the house of Rimmon" has become proverbial to indicate a dangerous and dishonest compromise. But Elisha's permission must not be misunderstood. He did but hand over this semi-heathen convert to the grace of God. It must be remembered that he lived in days long preceding the conviction that proselytism is a part of true religion; in days when the thought of missions to heathen lands was utterly unknown. The position of Naaman was wholly different from that of any

[1] This is the only place in Scripture where Rimmon is mentioned, though we have the name Tab-Rimmon ("Rimmon is good"), 1 Kings xv. 18, and Hadad-Rimmon (Zech. xii. 11). He was the god of the thunder. The word means "pomegranate," and some have fancied that this was one of his symbols. But the resemblance may be accidental, and the name was properly *Ramman*.

Israelite. He was only the convert, or the half-convert of a day, and though he acknowledged the supremacy of Jehovah as alone worthy of his worship, he probably shared in the belief—common even in Israel—that there were other gods, local gods, gods of the nations, to whom Jehovah might have divided the limits of their power.[1] To demand of one who, like Naaman, had been an idolater all his days, the sudden abandonment of every custom and tradition of his life, would have been to demand from him an unreasonable, and, in his circumstances, useless and all but impossible self-sacrifice. The best way was to let him feel and see for himself the futility of Rimmon-worship. If he were not frightened back from his sudden faith in Jehovah, the scruple of conscience which he already felt in making his request might naturally grow within him and lead him to all that was best and highest. The temporary condonation of an imperfection might be a wise step towards the ultimate realisation of a truth. We cannot at all blame Elisha, if, with such knowledge as he then possessed, he took a mercifully tolerant view of the exigencies of Naaman's position. The bowing in the house of Rimmon under such conditions probably seemed to him no more than an act of outward respect to the king and to the national religion in a case where no evil results could follow from Naaman's example.[2]

[1] See Deut. xxxii. 8, where the LXX. has *κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων*.

[2] The moral difficulty must have been early felt, for the Alexandrian LXX. reads *καὶ προσκυνήσω ἅμα αὐτῷ ἐγὼ Κυρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ μου*. But he would still be bowing in the House of Rimmon, though he might in his heart worship God. "Elisha, like Elijah" (says Dean Stanley), "made no effort to set right what had gone so wrong. Their mission was to make the best of what they found; not to bring back a rule of religion which had passed away, but to dwell on the Moral Law which could be fulfilled everywhere, not on the Ceremonial Law

But the general principle that *we* must *not* bow in the house of Rimmon remains unchanged. The light and knowledge vouchsafed to us far transcend those which existed in times when men had not seen the days of the Son of Man. The only rule which sincere Christians can follow is to have no truce with Canaan, no halting between two opinions, no tampering, no compliance, no connivance, no complicity with evil,—even no tolerance of evil as far as their own conduct is concerned. No good man, in the light of the Gospel dispensation, could condone himself in seeming to sanction—still less in doing—anything which in his opinion ought not to be done, or in saying anything which implied his own acquiescence in things which he knows to be evil. "Sir," said a parishioner to one of the non-juring clergy: "there is many a man who has made a great gash in his conscience; cannot you make a little nick in yours?" No! a *little* nick is, in one sense, as fatal as great gash. It is an abandonment of *the principle*; it is a violation of the Law. The wrong of it consists in this—that all evil begins, not in the commission of great crimes, but in the slight divergence from right rules. The angle made by two lines may be infinitesimally small, but produce the lines and it may require infinitude to span the separation between the lines which inclose so tiny an angle. The wise man gave the only true rule about wrong-doing, when he said, "Enter not into the path of the wicked and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn

which circumstances seemed to have put out of their reach: 'not sending the Shunammite to Jerusalem' (says Cardinal Newman), 'not eager for a proselyte in Naaman, yet making the heathen fear the Name of God, and proving to them that there was a prophet in Israel'" (Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 377; Newman, *Sermons*, viii. 415).

from it and pass away."[1] And the reason for his rule is that the beginning of sin—like the beginning of strife—"is as when one letteth out water."[2]

The proper answer to all abuses of any supposed concession to the lawfulness of bowing in the house of Rimmon—if that be interpreted to mean the doing of anything which our consciences cannot wholly approve—is *Obsta principiis*—avoid the beginnings of evil.

> "We are not worst at once; the course of evil
> Begins so slowly, and from such slight source,
> An infant's hand might stem the breach with clay;
> But let the stream grow wider, and philosophy,
> Age, and religion too, may strive in vain
> To stem the headstrong current."

The mean cupidity of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, gives a deplorable sequel to the story of the prophet's magnanimity. This man's wretched greed did its utmost to nullify the good influence of his master's example. There may be more wicked acts recorded in Scripture than that of Gehazi, but there is scarcely one which shows so paltry a disposition.

He had heard the conversation between his master and the Syrian marshal, and his cunning heart despised as a futile sentimentality the magnanimity which had refused an eagerly proffered reward. Naaman was rich: he had received a priceless boon; it would be rather a pleasure to him than otherwise to return for it some acknowledgment which he would not miss. Had he not even seemed a little hurt by Elisha's refusal to receive it? What possible harm could there be in taking what he was anxious to give? And how useful those magnificent presents would be, and to what excellent uses could they be put! He could not approve of the fantastic and unpractical scrupulosity

[1] Prov. iv. 14, 15. [2] Prov. xvii. 14.

which had led Elisha to refuse the "blessing" which he had so richly earned. Such attitudes of unworldliness seemed entirely foolish to Gehazi.

So pleaded the Judas-spirit within the man. By such specious delusions he inflamed his own covetousness, and fostered the evil temptation which had taken sudden and powerful hold upon his heart, until it took shape in a wicked resolve.

The mischief of Elisha's quixotic refusal was done, but it could be speedily undone, and no one would be the worse. The evil spirit was whispering to Gehazi:—

> "Be mine and Sin's for one short hour; and then
> Be all thy life the happiest man of men."

"Behold," he said, with some contempt both for Elisha and for Naaman, "my master hath let off this Naaman the Syrian; but as the Lord liveth I will run after him, and take somewhat of him."

"As the Lord liveth!" It had been a favourite appeal of Elijah and Elisha, and the use of it by Gehazi shows how utterly meaningless and how very dangerous such solemn words become when they are degraded into formulæ.[1] It is thus that the habit of swearing begins. The light use of holy words very soon leads to their utter degradation. How keen is the satire in Cowper's little story:—

> "A Persian, humble servant of the sun,
> Who, though devout, yet bigotry had none,
> Hearing a lawyer, grave in his address,
> With adjurations every word impress,—
> Supposed the man a bishop, or, at least,
> God's Name so often on his lips—a priest.
> Bowed at the close with all his gracious airs,
> And begged an interest in his frequent prayers!"

[1] On Gehazi's lips it meant no more than the incessant *Wallah*, "by God," of Mohammedans.

Had Gehazi felt their true meaning—had he realised that on Elisha's lips they meant something infinitely more real than on his own, he would not have forgotten that in Elisha's answer to Naaman they had all the validity of an oath, and that he was inflicting on his master a shameful wrong, when he led Naaman to believe that, after so sacred an adjuration, the prophet had frivolously changed his mind.

Gehazi had not very far to run,[1] for in a country full of hills, and of which the roads are rough, horses and chariots advance but slowly. Naaman, chancing to glance backwards, saw the prophet's attendant running after him. Anticipating that he must be the bearer of some message from Elisha, he not only halted the cavalcade, but sprang down from his chariot,[2] and went to meet him with the anxious question, "Is all well?"

"Well," answered Gehazi; and then had ready his cunning lie. "Two youths," he said, "of the prophetic schools had just unexpectedly come to his master from the hill country of Ephraim; and though he would accept nothing for himself, Elisha would be glad if Naaman would spare him two changes of garments, and one talent of silver for these poor members of a sacred calling."[3]

Naaman must have been a little more or a little less than human if he did not feel a touch of disappointment on hearing this message. The gift was nothing to him.

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[1] 2 Kings v. 19. Heb., *kib'rath aretz*, "a little way"—literally, "a space of country." (The Vatican LXX. follows another reading, *εἰς Δεβραθὰ τῆς γῆς*; Vulg., *electo terræ tempore* [?].)

[2] LXX., *κατεπήδησεν*.

[3] A talent of silver was worth about £400—an enormous sum for two half-naked youths.

It was a delight to him to give it, if only to lighten a little the burden of gratitude which he felt towards his benefactor. But if he had felt elevated by the magnanimous example of Elisha's disinterestedness, he must have thought that this hasty request pointed to a little regret on the prophet's part for his noble self-denial. After all, then, even prophets were but men, and gold after all was gold! The change of mind about the gift brought Elisha a little nearer the ordinary level of humanity, and, so far, it acted as a sort of disenchantment from the high ideal exhibited by his former refusal. And so Naaman said, with alacrity, "Be content: take two talents."

The fact that Gehazi's conduct thus inevitably compromised his master, and undid the effects of his example, is part of the measure of the man's apostacy. It showed how false and hypocritical was his position, how unworthy he was to be the ministering servant of a prophet. Elisha was evidently deceived in the man altogether. The heinousness of his guilt lies in the words *Corruptio optimi pessima.* When religion is used for a cloak of covetousness, of usurping ambition, of secret immorality, it becomes deadlier than infidelity. Men raze the sanctuary, and build their idol temples on the hallowed ground. They cover their base encroachments and impure designs with the "cloke of profession, doubly lined with the fox-fur of hypocrisy," and hide the leprosy which is breaking out upon their foreheads with the golden *petalon* on which is inscribed the title of "holiness to the Lord."

At first Gehazi did not like to take so large a sum as two talents; but the crime was already committed, and there was not much more harm done in taking two talents than in taking one. Naaman urged him, and

it is very improbable that, unless the chances of detection weighed with him, he needed much urging. So the Syrian weighed out silver ingots to the amount of two talents, and putting them in two satchels laid them on two of his servants and told them to carry the money before Gehazi to Elisha's house. But Gehazi had to keep a look-out lest his nefarious dealings should be observed, and when they came to Ophel—the word means the foot of the hill of Samaria, or some part of the fortifications [1]—he took the bags from the two Syrians, dismissed them, and carried the money to some place where he could conceal it in the house. Then, as though nothing had happened, with his usual smooth face of sanctimonious integrity, the pious Jesuit went and stood before his master.

He had not been unnoticed! His heart must have sunk within him when there smote upon his ear Elisha's question,—

"Whence comest thou, Gehazi?"

But one lie is as easy as another, and Gehazi was doubtless an adept at lying.

"Thy servant went no whither," he replied, with an air of innocent surprise.

"*Went not* my beloved one?" [2] said Elisha—and he must have said it with a groan, as he thought how utterly unworthy the youth, whom he thus called "my loving heart" or "my dear friend,"—"when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee?" It may be

[1] **2 Kings v. 24.** The LXX. (*εἰς τὸ σκοτεινὸν*) seems to have read אֹפֶל (*ophel*); "darkness," a treasury or secret place, for עֹפֶל, and so the Vulgate *jam vesperi.*

[2] **2 Kings v. 26.** The verse is so interpreted by some critics, especially Ewald, followed by Stanley. Margin, R.V.: "Mine heart went not from me, when" etc.

that from the hill of Samaria Elisha had seen it all, or that he had been told by one who had seen it. If not, he had been rightly led to read the secret of his servant's guilt. "Is it a time," he asked, "to act thus?" Did not my example show thee that there was a high object in refusing this Syrian's gifts, and in leading him to feel that the servants of Jehovah do His bidding with no afterthought of sordid considerations? Are there not enough troubles about us actual and impending, to show that this is no time for the accumulation of earthly treasures? Is it a time to receive money—and all that money will procure? to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants? Has a prophet no higher aim than the accumulation of earthly goods, and are his needs such as earthly goods can supply? And hast thou, the daily friend and attendant of a prophet, learnt so little from his precepts and his example?

Then followed the tremendous penalty for so grievous a transgression—a transgression made up of meanness, irreverence, greed, cheating, treachery, and lies.

"The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever!" "Oh heavy talents of Gehazi!" exclaims Bishop Hall: "Oh the horror of the one unchangeable suit! How much better had been a light purse and a homely coat, with a sound body and a clean soul!"

"And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."[1]

It is the characteristic of the leprous taint in the system to be thus suddenly developed, and apparently in crises of sudden and overpowering emotion it might affect the whole blood. And one of the many morals

[1] Exod. iv. 6; Num. xii. 10.

which lie in Gehazi's story is again that moral to which the world's whole experience sets its seal—that though the guilty soul may sell itself for a desired price, the sum-total of that price is nought. It is Achan's ingots buried under the sod on which stood his tent. It is Naboth's vineyard made abhorrent to Ahab on the day he entered it. It is the thirty pieces of silver which Judas dashed with a shriek upon the Temple floor. It is Gehazi's leprosy for which no silver talents or changes of raiment could atone.

The story of Gehazi—of the son of the prophets who would naturally have succeeded Elisha as Elisha had succeeded Elijah—must have had a tremendous significance to warn the members of the prophetic schools from the peril of covetousness. That peril, as all history proves to us, is one from which popes and priests, monks, and even nominally ascetic and nominally pauper communities, have never been exempt;—to which, it may even be said, that they have been peculiarly liable. Mercenariness and falsity, displayed under the pretence of religion, were never more overwhelmingly rebuked. Yet, as the Rabbis said, it would have been better if Elisha, in repelling with the left hand, had also drawn with the right.[1]

The fine story of Elisha and Naaman, and the fall and punishment of Gehazi, is followed by one of the anecdotes of the prophet's life which appears to our unsophisticated, perhaps to our imperfectly enlightened judgment, to rise but little above the ecclesiastical portents related in mediæval hagiologies.

[1] The later Rabbis thought that Elisha was too severe with Gehazi, and was punished with sickness because "he repelled him with both his hands" (*Bava-Metsia*, f. 87, 1, and *Yalkut Jeremiah*).

At some unnamed place—perhaps Jericho—the house of the Sons of the Prophets had become too small for their numbers and requirements, and they asked Elisha's leave to go down to the Jordan and cut beams to make a new residence. Elisha gave them leave, and at their request consented to go with them. While they were hewing, the axe-head of one of them fell into the water, and he cried out, "Alas! master, it was borrowed!" Elisha ascertained where it had fallen. He then cut down a stick,[1] and cast it on the spot, and the iron swam and the man recovered it.

The story is perhaps an imaginative reproduction of some unwonted incident. At any rate, we have no sufficient evidence to prove that it may not be so. It is wholly unlike the economy invariably shown in the Scripture narratives which tell us of the exercise of supernatural power. All the eternal laws of nature are here superseded at a word, as though it were an every-day matter, without even any recorded invocation of Jehovah, to restore an axe-head, which could obviously have been recovered or resupplied in some much less stupendous way than by making iron swim on the surface of a swift-flowing river. It is easy to invent conventional and *à priori* apologies to show that religion demands the unquestioning acceptance of this prodigy, and that a man must be shockingly wicked who does not feel certain that it happened exactly in the literal sense; but whether the doubt or the defence be morally worthier, is a thing which God alone can judge.[2]

[1] The Hebrew word for "cut off" (*qatsab*) is very rare. LXX., ἀπέκνισε ξύλον; Vulg., *præcidit lignum.*

[2] It must be further borne in mind that "the iron did swim" (A.V.) is less accurate than "made the iron to swim" (R.V.). The LXX. has ἐπεπόλασε, "brought to the surface." Von Gerlach says, "He thrust the stick into the water, and raised the iron to the surface."

CHAPTER VII

ELISHA AND THE SYRIANS

2 KINGS vi. 1—23

"Now there was found in the city a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city."—ECCLES. ix. 15.

ELISHA, unlike his master Elijah, was, during a great part of his long career, intimately mixed up with the political and military fortunes of his country. The king of Israel who occurs in the following narratives is left nameless—always the sign of later and more vague tradition ; but he has usually been identified with Jehoram ben-Ahab, and, though not without some misgivings, we shall assume that the identification is correct. His dealings with Elisha never seem to have been very cordial, though on one occasion he calls him "my father." The relations between them at times became strained and even stormy.

His reign was rendered miserable by the incessant infestation of Syrian marauders. In these difficulties he was greatly helped by Elisha. The prophet repeatedly frustrated the designs of the Syrian king by revealing to Jehoram the places of Benhadad's ambuscades, so that Jehoram could change the destination of his hunting parties or other movements, and escape the plots laid to seize his person. Benhadad, finding himself thus frustrated, and suspecting that

it was due to treachery, called his servants together in grief and indignation, and asked who was the traitor among them. His officers assured him that they were all faithful, but that the secrets whispered in his bed-chamber were revealed to Jehoram by Elisha the prophet in Israel, whose fame had spread into Syria, perhaps because of the cure of Naaman. The king, unable to take any step while his counsels were thus published to his enemies, thought—not very consistently—that he could surprise and seize Elisha himself, and sent to find out where he was. At that time he was living in Dothan, about twelve miles north-east of Samaria,[1] and Benhadad sent a contingent with horses and chariots by night to surround the city, and prevent any escape from its gates. That he could thus besiege a town so near the capital shows the helplessness to which Israel had been now reduced.

When Elisha's servitor rose in the morning he was terrified to see the Syrians encamped round the city, and cried to Elisha, "Alas! my master, what shall we do?"

"Fear not," said the prophet: "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." He prayed God to grant the youth the same open eyes, the same spiritual vision which he himself enjoyed; and the youth saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

This incident has been full of comfort to millions, as a beautiful illustration of the truth that—

> "The hosts of God encamp around
> The dwellings of the just;
> Deliverance He affords to all
> Who on His promise trust.

[1] Gen. xxxvii. 17, *Dothain*, "two wells" (?).

"Oh, make but trial of His love,
Experience will decide,
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in His truth confide."

The youth's affectionate alarm had not been shared by his master. He knew that to every true servant of God the promise will be fulfilled, "He shall defend thee under His wings; thou shalt be safe under His feathers; His righteousness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler."[1]

Were our eyes similarly opened, we too should see the reality of the Divine protection and providence, whether under the visible form of angelic ministrants or not. Scripture in general, and the Psalms in particular, are full of the serenity inspired by this conviction. The story of Elisha is a picture-commentary on the Psalmist's words: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear Him, and delivereth them."[2] "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."[3] "And I will encamp about Mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with Mine eyes."[4] "The angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."[5]

But what is the exact meaning of all these lovely promises? They do not mean that God's children and saints will always be shielded from anguish or defeat, from the triumph of their enemies, or even from apparently hopeless and final failure, or miserable death.

[1] Psalm xci. 4.
[2] Psalm xxxiv. 7.
[3] Psalm xci. 11.
[4] Zech. ix. 8.
[5] Isa. lxiii. 9.

The lesson is not that their persons shall be inviolable, or that the enemies who advance against them to eat up their flesh shall always stumble and fall. The experiences of tens of thousands of troubled lives and martyred ends instantly prove the futility of any such reading of these assurances. The saints of God, the prophets of God, have died in exile and in prison, have been tortured on the rack and broken on the wheel, and burnt to ashes at innumerable stakes; they have been destitute, afflicted, tormented, in their lives—stoned, beheaded, sawn asunder, in every form of hideous death; they have rotted in miry dungeons, have starved on desolate shores, have sighed out their souls into the agonising flame. The Cross of Christ stands as the emblem and the explanation of their lives, which fools count to be madness, and their end without honour. On earth they have, far more often than not, been crushed by the hatred and been delivered over to the will of their enemies. Where, then, have been those horses and chariots of fire?

They have been there no less than around Elisha at Dothan. The eyes spiritually opened have seen them, even when the sword flashed, or the flames wrapped them in indescribable torment. The sense of God's protection has least deserted His saints when to the world's eyes they seemed to have been most utterly abandoned. There has been a joy in prisons and at stakes, it has been said, far exceeding the joy of harvest. "Pray for me," said a poor boy of fifteen, who was being burned at Smithfield in the fierce days of Mary Tudor. "I would as soon pray for a dog as for a heretic like thee," answered one of the spectators. "Then, Son of God, shine Thou upon me!" cried the boy-martyr; and instantly, upon a dull

and cloudy day, the sun shone out, and bathed his young face in glory; whereat, says the martyrologist, men greatly marvelled. But is there one death-bed of a saint on which that glory has not shone?

The presence of those horses and chariots of fire, unseen by the carnal eye—the promises which, if they be taken literally, all experience seems to frustrate—mean two things, which they who are the heirs of such promises, and who would without them be of all men most miserable, have clearly understood.

They mean, first, that as long as a child of God is on the path of duty, and until that duty has been fulfilled, he is inviolable and invulnerable. He shall tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shall he trample under his feet. He shall take up the serpent in his hands; and if he drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt him. He shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day; of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor of the demon that destroyeth in the noonday. A thousand shall fall at his right hand, and ten thousand beside him; but it shall not come nigh him. The histories and the legends of numberless marvellous deliverances all confirm the truth that, when a man fears the Lord, He will keep him in all his ways, and give His angels charge over him, lest at any time he dash his foot against a stone. God will not permit any mortal force, or any combination of forces, to hinder the accomplishment of the task entrusted to His servant. It is the sense of this truth which, under circumstances however menacing, should enable us to

> "bate no jot
> Of heart or hope, but still bear up, and steer
> Uphillward"

It is this conviction which has nerved men to face insuperable difficulties, and achieve impossible and unhoped-for ends. It works in the spirit of the cry, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel be thou changed into a plain!" It inspires the faith as a grain of mustard seed which is able to say to this mountain, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea,"—and it shall obey. It stands unmoved upon the pinnacle of the Temple whereon it has been placed, while the enemy and the tempter, smitten by amazement, falls. In the hour of difficulty it can cry,—

"Rescue me, O Lord, in this mine evil hour,
As of old so many by Thy mighty power,—
Enoch and Elias from the common doom;
Noe from the waters in a saving home;
Abraham from the abounding guilt of heathenesse;
Job from all his multiform and fell distress;
Isaac when his faither's knife was raised to slay;
Lot from burning Sodom on the judgment day;
Moses from the land of bondage and despair;
Daniel from the hungry lions in their lair;
And the children three amid the furnace flame;
Chaste Susanna from the slander and the shame;
David from Golia, and the wrath of Saul;
And the two Apostles from their prison-thrall."

The strangeness, the unexpectedness, the apparently inadequate source of the deliverance, have deepened the trust that it has not been due to accident. Once, when Felix of Nola was flying from his enemies, he took refuge in a cave, and he had scarcely entered it before a spider began to spin its web over the fissure. The pursuer, passing by, saw the spider's web, and did not look into the cave; and the saint, as he came out into safety, remarked: "*Ubi Deus est, ibi aranea murus, ubi non est ibi murus aranea*" ("Where God is, a spider's

web is as a wall; where He is not, a wall is but as a spider's web").

This is one lesson conveyed in the words of Christ when the Pharisees told Him that Herod desired to kill Him. He knew that Herod could not kill Him till He had done His Father's will and finished His work. "Go ye," He said, "and tell this fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following."

But had all this been otherwise—had Felix been seized by his pursuers and perished, as has been the common lot of God's prophets and heroes—he would not therefore have felt himself mocked by these exceeding great and precious promises. The chariots and horses of fire are still there, and are there to work a deliverance yet greater and more eternal. Their office is not to deliver the perishing body, but to carry into God's glory the immortal soul. This is indicated in the death-scene of Elijah. This was the vision of the dying Stephen. This was what Christian legend meant when it embellished with beautiful incidents such scenes as the death of Polycarp. This was what led Bunyan to write, when he describes the death of Christian, that "all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side." When poor Captain Allan Gardiner lay starving to death in that Antarctic isle with his wretched companions, he yet painted on the entrance of the cave which had sheltered them, and near to which his remains were found, a hand pointing downward at the words, "Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him."

There was a touch of almost joyful humour in the

way in which Elisha proceeded to use, in the present emergency, the power of Divine deliverance. He seems to have gone out of the town and down the hill to the Syrian captains,[1] and prayed God to send them illusion (ἀβλεψία), so that they might be misled.[2] Then he boldly said to them, "You are being deceived: you have come the wrong way, and to the wrong city. I will take you to the man whom ye seek." The incident reminds us of the story of Athanasius, who, when he was being pursued on the Nile, took the opportunity of a bend of the river boldly to turn back his boat towards Alexandria. "Do you know where Athanasius is?" shouted the pursuers. "He is not far off!" answered the disguised Archbishop; and the emissaries of Constantius went on in the opposite direction from that in which he made his escape.

Elisha led the Syrians in their delusion straight into the city of Samaria, where they suddenly found themselves at the mercy of the king and his troops. Delighted at so great a chance of vengeance, Jehoram eagerly exclaimed, "My father, shall I smite, shall I smite?"

Certainly the request cannot be regarded as unnatural, when we remember that in the Book of Deuteronomy, which did not come to light till after this period, we read the rule that, when the Israelites had taken a besieged city, "thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword";[3] and that when Israel defeated the Midianites[4] they slew all the males,

[1] Adopting the reading of the Syriac version: "And when they [Elisha and his servant] came down to them [the Syrians]." The ordinary reading is "to *him*," which makes the narrative less clear.

[2] 2 Kings vi. 19. סַנְוֵרִים, ἀορασία, only found in Gen. xix. 11.

[3] Deut. xx. 13.

[4] Num. xxxi. 7.

and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host because they had not also slain all the women. He then (as we are told) ordered them to slay all except the virgins, and also—horrible to relate—"*every male among the little ones.*" The spirit of Elisha on this occasion was larger and more merciful. It almost rose to the spirit of Him who said, "It was said to them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies; forgive them that hate you; do good unto them that despitefully use you and persecute you." He asked Jehoram reproachfully whether he would even have smitten those whom he had taken captive with sword and bow.[1] He not only bade the king to spare them, but to set food before them, and send them home. Jehoram did so at great expense, and the narrative ends by telling us that the example of such merciful generosity produced so favourable an impression that "the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

It is difficult, however, to see where this statement can be chronologically fitted in. The very next chapter —so loosely is the compilation put together, so completely is the sequence of events here neglected—begins with telling us that Benhadad with all his host went up and besieged Samaria. Any peace or respite gained by Elisha's compassionate magnanimity must, in any case, have been exceedingly short-lived. Josephus tries to get over the difficulty by drawing a sufficiently futile distinction between marauding bands and a direct invasion,[2] and he says that King Benhadad gave up his frays through *fear* of Elisha. But, in the first

[1] Vulg., *Non percuties; neque enim cepisti eos ut percutias.*

[2] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. iv. 4, Κρύφα μὲν οὐκέτι . . . φανερῶς δέ.

place, the encompassing of Dothan had been carried out by "*a great host* with horses and chariots," which is hardly consistent with the notion of a foray, though it creates new difficulties as to the numbers whom Elisha led to Samaria; secondly, the substitution of a direct invasion for predatory incursions would have been no gain to Israel, but a more deadly peril; and, thirdly, if it was fear of Elisha which stopped the king's raids, it is strange that it had no effect in preventing his invasions. We have, however, no data for any final solution of these problems, and it is useless to meet them with a network of idle conjectures. Such difficulties naturally occur in narratives so vague and unchronological as those presented to us in the documents from the story of Elisha which the compiler wove into his history of Israel and Judah.[1]

[1] Kittel, following Kuenen, surmises that this story has got misplaced; that it does not belong to the days of Jehoram ben-Ahab and Benhadad II., but to the days of Jehoahaz ben-Jehu and Benhadad III., the son of Hazael (*Gesch. der Hebr.*, 249). In a very uncertain question I have followed the conclusion arrived at by the majority of scholars, ancient and modern.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAMINE AND THE SIEGE

2 KINGS vi. 24—vii. 20

"'Tis truly no good plan when princes play
The vulture among carrion; but when
They play the carrion among vultures—that
Is ten times worse."

LESSING, *Nathan the Wise*, Act I., Sc. 3.

IF the Benhadad, King of Syria, who reduced Samaria to the horrible straits recorded in this chapter, (2 Kings vi.) was the same Benhadad whom Ahab had treated with such impolitic confidence, his hatred against Israel must indeed have burned hotly. Besides the affair at Dothan, he had already been twice routed with enormous slaughter, and against those disasters he could only set the death of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead. It is obvious from the preceding narrative that he could advance at any time at his will and pleasure into the heart of his enemy's country, and shut him up in his capital almost without resistance. The siege-trains of ancient days were very inefficient, and any strong fortress could hold out for years, if only it was well provisioned. Such was not the case with Samaria, and it was reduced to a condition of sore famine. Food so loathsome as an ass's head, which at other times the poorest would have spurned, was now sold for eighty shekels' weight of silver (about £8); and the fourth part

of a *xestes* or *kab*—which was itself the smallest dry-measure, the sixth part of a *seah*—of the coarse, common pulse, or roasted chick-peas, vulgarly known as "dove's dung," fetched five shekels (about 12*s.* 6*d.*).[1]

While things were at this awful pass, "the King of Israel," as he is vaguely called throughout this story, went his rounds upon the wall to visit the sentries and encourage the soldiers in their defence. As he passed, a woman cried, "Help, my lord, O king!" In Eastern monarchies the king is a judge of the humblest; a suppliant, however mean, may cry to him. Jehoram thought that this was but one of the appeals which sprang from the clamorous mendicity of famine with which he had grown so painfully familiar. "The Lord curse you!" he exclaimed impatiently.[2] "How can I help you? Every barn-floor is bare, every wine-press drained." And he passed on.

But the woman continued her wild clamour, and turning round at her importunity, he asked, "What aileth thee?"

He heard in reply a narrative as appalling as ever smote the ear of a king in a besieged city. Among the curses denounced upon apostate Israel in the Pentateuch, we read, "Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat";[3] or, as it is expressed more fully in the Book

[1] So *asafœtida* is called "devil's dung" in Germany; and the *Herba alcali*, "sparrow's dung" by Arabs. The *Q'ri*, however, supports the *literal* meaning; and compare 2 Kings xviii. 27; Jos., *B. J.*, V. xiii. 7. Analogies for these prices are quoted from classic authors. Plutarch (*Artax.*, xxiv.) mentions a siege in which an ass's head could hardly be got for sixty drachmas (£2 10*s.*), though usually the whole animal only cost £1. Pliny (*H. N.*, viii. 57) says that during Hannibal's siege of Casilinum a mouse sold for £6 5*s.*

[2] So Clericus. Comp. Jos. *ἐπηράσατο αὐτῇ.* [3] Lev. xxvi. 29.

of Deuteronomy, "He shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land. . And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: so that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil towards his brother, and towards the wife of his bosom, and towards the remnant of his children which he shall leave; so that he shall not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat, because he hath nothing left him in the siege. The tender and delicate woman, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil towards the husband of her bosom, and towards her son, and towards her daughter, and towards her children: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and the straitness, if thou wilt not observe to do all the words of the law, . that thou mayest fear the glorious and fearful name, *The Lord thy God.*"[1] We find almost the same words in the prophet Jeremiah;[2] and in Lamentations we read: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of My people."[3]

Isaiah asks, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Alas! it has always been so in those awful scenes of famine, whether after shipwreck or in beleaguered cities, when man becomes degraded to an animal, with all an animal's primitive instincts, and

[1] Deut. xxviii. 52–58.
[2] Jer. xix. 9.
[3] Lam. iv. 10: comp. ii. 20; Ezek. v. 10; Jos., *B. J.*, VI. iii. 4.

when the wild beast appears under the thin veneer of civilisation. So it was at the siege of Jerusalem, and at the siege of Magdeburg, and at the wreck of the *Medusa,* and on many another occasion when the pangs of hunger have corroded away every vestige of the tender affections and of the moral sense.

And this had occurred at Samaria: her women had become cannibals and devoured their own little ones.

"This woman," screamed the suppliant, pointing her lean finger at a wretch like herself—"this woman said unto me, 'Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will afterwards eat my son.' I yielded to her suggestion. We killed my little son, and ate his flesh when we had sodden it. Next day I said to her, 'Now give thy son, that we may eat him'; and she hath hid her son!"

How could the king answer such a horrible appeal? Injustice had been done; but was he to order and to sanction by way of redress fresh cannibalism, and the murder by its mother of another babe? In that foul obliteration of every natural instinct, what could he do, what could any man do? Can there be equity among raging wild beasts, when they roar for their prey and are unfed?

All that the miserable king could do was to rend his clothes in horror and to pass on, and as his starving subjects passed by him on the wall they saw that he wore sackcloth beneath his purple, in sign, if not of repentance, yet of anguish, if not of prayer, yet of uttermost humiliation.[1]

But if indeed he had, in his misery, donned that sackcloth in order that at least the semblance of self-mortification might move Jehovah to pity, as it had

[1] 1 Kings xxi. 27; Isa. xx. 2, 3.

done in the case of his father Ahab, the external sign of his humility had done nothing to change his heart. The gruesome appeal to which he had just been forced to listen only kindled him to a burst of fury.[1] The man who had warned, who had prophesied, who so far during this siege had not raised his finger to help—the man who was believed to be able to wield the powers of heaven, and had wrought no deliverance for his people, but suffered them to sink unaided into these depths ef abjectness—should he be permitted to live? If Jehovah would not help, of what use was Elisha? "God do so to me, and more also," exclaimed Jehoram —using his mother's oath to Elijah[2]—"if the head of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, shall stand on him this day."

Was this the king who had come to Elisha with such humble entreaty, when three armies were perishing of thirst before the eyes of Moab? Was this the king who had called Elisha "my father," when the prophet had led the deluded host of Syrians into Samaria, and bidden Jehoram to set large provision before them? It was the same king, but now transported with fury and reduced to despair. His threat against God's prophet was in reality a defiance of God, as when our unhappy Plantagenet, Henry II., maddened by the loss of Le Mans, exclaimed that, since God had robbed him of the town he loved, he would pay God out by robbing Him of that which He most loved in him—his soul.

Jehoram's threat was meant in grim earnest, and he sent an executioner to carry it out. Elisha was sitting in his house with the elders of the city, who had come

[1] Compare the wrath of Pashur the priest in consequence of the denunciation of Jeremiah (Jer. xx. 2).

[2] 1 Kings xix. 2.

to him for counsel at this hour of supreme need. He knew what was intended for him, and it had also been revealed to him that the king would follow his messenger to cancel his sanguinary threat. "See ye," he said to the elders, "how this son of a murderer"—for again he indicates his contempt and indignation for the son of Ahab and Jezebel—"hath sent to behead me! When he comes, shut the door, and hold it fast against him. His master is following hard at his heels."

The messenger came, and was refused admittance. The king followed him,[1] and entering the room where the prophet and elders sat, he gave up his wicked design of slaying Elisha with the sword, but he overwhelmed him with reproaches, and in despair renounced all further trust in Jehovah. Elisha, as the king's words imply, must have refused all permission to capitulate: he must have held out from the first a promise that God would send deliverance. But no deliverance had come. The people were starving. Women were devouring their babes. Nothing worse could happen if they flung open their gates to the Syrian host. "Behold," the king said, "this evil is Jehovah's doing. You have deceived us. Jehovah does not intend to deliver us. Why should I wait for Him any longer?" Perhaps the king meant to imply that his mother's Baal was better worth serving, and would never have left his votaries to sink into these straits.

And now man's extremity had come, and it was God's opportunity. Elisha at last was permitted to announce that the worst was over, that the next day

[1] In 2 Kings vi. 33 we should read *melek* (king) for *maleak* (messenger). Jehoram repented of his hasty order.

plenty should smile on the besieged city. "Thus saith the Lord," he exclaimed to the exhausted and despondent king, "To-morrow about this time, instead of an ass's head being sold for eighty shekels, and a thimbleful of pulse for five shekels, a peck of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two pecks of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria."

The king was leaning on the hand of his chief officer, and to this soldier the promise seemed not only incredible, but silly: for at the best he could only suppose that the Syrian host would raise the siege; and though to hope for that looked an absurdity, yet even that would not in the least fulfil the immense prediction. He answered, therefore, in utter scorn: "Yes! Jehovah is making windows in heaven! But even thus could this be?" It is much as if he should have answered some solemn pledge with a derisive proverb such as, "Yes! if the sky should fall, we should catch larks!"

Such contemptuous repudiation of a Divine promise was a blasphemy; and answering scorn with scorn, and riddle with riddling, Elisha answers the mocker, "Yes! and *you* shall see this, but shall not enjoy it."

The word of the Lord was the word of a true prophet, and the miracle was wrought. Not only was the siege raised, but the wholly unforeseen spoil of the entire Syrian camp, with all its accumulated rapine, brought about the predicted plenty.

There were four lepers[1] outside the gate of Samaria, like the leprous mendicants who gather there to this day. They were cut off from all human society, except their own. Leprosy was treated as contagious, and if "houses of the unfortunate" (*Biut-el-Masâkin*) were

[1] The Jews say Gehazi, and his three sons (Jarchi).

provided for them, as seems to have been the case at Jerusalem, they were built outside the city walls.[1] They could only live by beggary, and this was an aggravation of their miserable condition. And how could any one fling food to these beggars over the walls, when food of any kind was barely to be had within them?

So taking counsel of their despair, they decided that they would desert to the Syrians: among them they would at least find food, if their lives were spared; and if not, death would be a happy release from their present misery.

So in the evening twilight, when they could not be seen or shot at from the city wall as deserters, they stole down to the Syrian camp.

When they reached its outermost circle, to their amazement all was silence. They crept into one of the tents in fear and astonishment. There was food and drink there, and they satisfied the cravings of their hunger. It was also stored with booty from the plundered cities and villages of Israel. To this they helped themselves, and took it away and hid it. Having spoiled this tent, they entered a second. It was likewise deserted, and they carried a fresh store of treasures to their hiding-place. And then they began to feel uneasy at not divulging to their starving fellow-citizens the strange and golden tidings of a deserted camp. The night was wearing on; day would reveal the secret. If they carried the good news, they would doubtless earn a rich guerdon. If they waited till morning, they might be put to death for their selfish reticence and theft. It was safest to return to the city, and rouse the warder, and send a message to the palace. So the lepers hurried back through the night,

[1] Lev. xiii. 46; Num. v. 2, 3.

and shouted to the sentinel at the gate, "We went to the Syrian camp, and it was deserted! Not a man was there, not a sound was to be heard. The horses were tethered there, and the asses, and the tents were left just as they were."

The sentinel called the other watchmen to hear the wonderful news, and instantly ran with it to the palace. The slumbering house was roused; and though it was still night, the king himself arose. But he could not shake off his despondency, and made no reference to Elisha's prediction. News sometimes sounds too good to be true. "It is only a decoy," he said. "They can only have left their camp to lure us into an ambuscade, that they may return, and slaughter us, and capture our city."

"Send to see," answered one of his courtiers. "Send five horsemen to test the truth, and to look out. If they perish, their fate is but the fate of us all."

So two chariots with horses were despatched, with instructions not only to visit the camp, but track the movements of the host.

They went, and found that it was as the lepers had said. The camp was deserted, and lay there as an immense booty; and for some reason the Syrians had fled towards the Jordan to make good their escape to Damascus by the eastern bank. The whole road was strewn with the traces of their headlong flight; it was full of scattered garments and vessels.

Probably, too, the messengers came across some disabled fugitive, and learnt the secret of this amazing stampede. It was the result of one of those sudden unaccountable panics to which the huge, unwieldy, heterogeneous Eastern armies, which have no organised system of sentries, and no trained discipline, are con-

stantly liable. We have already met with several instances in the history of Israel. Such was the panic which seized the Midianites when Gideon's three hundred blew their trumpets; and the panic of the Syrians before Ahab's pages of the provinces; and of the combined armies in the Valley of Salt; and of the Moabites at Wady-el-Ahsy; and afterwards of the Assyrians before the walls of Jerusalem. Fear is physically contagious, and, when once it has set in, it swells with such unaccountable violence, that the Greeks called these terrors "panic," because they believed them to be directly inspired by the god Pan. Well-disciplined as was the army of the Ten Thousand Greeks in their famous retreat, they nearly fell victims to a sudden panic, had not Clearchus, with prompt resource, published by the herald the proclamation of a reward for the arrest of the man who had let the ass loose. Such an unaccountable terror—caused by a noise as of chariots and of horses which reverberated among the hills—had seized the Syrian host. They thought that Jehoram had secretly hired an army of the princes of the Khetas[1] and of the Egyptians to march suddenly upon them. In wild confusion, not stopping to reason or to inquire, they took to flight, increasing their panic by the noise and rush of their own precipitance.

No sooner had the messengers delivered their glad tidings, than the people of Samaria began to pour tumultuously out of the gates, to fling themselves on the food and on the spoil. It was like the rush of the dirty, starving, emaciated wretches which horrified the keepers

[1] The capitals of the ancient Hittites—a nation whose fame had been almost entirely obliterated till a few years ago—were Karchemish, Kadesh, Hamath, and Helbon (Aleppo).

of the reserved stores at Smolensk in Napoleon's retrea from Moscow, and forced them to shut the gates, an fling food and grain to the struggling soldiers out of th windows of the granaries To secure order and preven disaster, the king appointed his attendant lord to kee the gate. But the torrent of people flung him down and they trampled on his body in their eagerness fo relief. He died after having seen that the promis of Elisha was fulfilled, and that the cheapness an abundance had been granted, the prophecy of which h thought only fit for his sceptical derision.

"The sudden panic which delivered the city," say Dean Stanley, "is the one marked intervention o behalf of the northern capital. No other incident coul be found in the sacred annals so appropriately t express, in the Church of Gouda, the pious gratitud of the citizens of Leyden, for their deliverance from th Spanish army, as the miraculous raising of the siege c Samaria."[1]

[1] *Lectures*, ii. 345.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHUNAMMITE AND HAZAEL

2 KINGS viii. 1—6, 7—15. (Circ. B.C. 886.)

"Our acts still follow with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are."
GEORGE ELIOT.

THE next anecdote of Elisha brings us once more into contact with the Lady of Shunem. Famines, or dearths, were unhappily of very frequent occurrence in a country which is so wholly dependent, as Palestine is, upon the early and latter rain. On some former occasion Elisha had foreseen that "Jehovah had called for a famine"; for the sword, the famine, and the pestilence are represented as ministers who wait His bidding.[1] He had also foreseen that it would be of long duration, and in kindness to the Shunammite had warned her that she had better remove for a time into a land in which there was greater plenty. It was under similar circumstances that Elimelech and Naomi, ancestors of David's line, had taken their sons Mahlon and Chilion, and gone to live in the land of Moab; and, indeed, the famine which decided the migration of Jacob and his children into Egypt had been a turning-point in the history of the Chosen People.

[1] Jer. xxv. 29; Ezek. xxxviii. 21.

The Lady of Shunem had learnt by experience the weight of Elisha's words. Her husband is not mentioned, and was probably dead; so she arose with her household, and went for seven years to live in the plain of Philistia. At the end of that time the dearth had ceased, and she returned to Shunem, but only to find that during her absence her house and land were in possession of other owners, and had probably escheated to the Crown. The king was the ultimate, and to a great extent the only, source of justice in his little kingdom, and she went to lay her claim before him and demand the restitution of her property. By a providential circumstance she came exactly at the most favourable moment. The king—it must have been Jehoram—was at the very time talking to Gehazi about the great works of Elisha. As it is unlikely that he would converse long with a leper, and as Gehazi is still called "the servant of the man of God," the incident may here be narrated out of order. It is pleasant to find Jehoram taking so deep an interest in the prophet's story. Already on many occasions during his wars with Moab and Syria, as well as on the occasion of Naaman's visit, if that had already occurred, he had received the completest proof of the reality of Elisha's mission, but he might be naturally unaware of the many private incidents in which he had exhibited a supernatural power. Among other stories Gehazi was telling him that of the Shunammite, and how Elisha had given life to her dead son. At that juncture she came before the king, and Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the very woman, and this is her son whom Elisha recalled to life." In answer to Jehoram's questions she confirmed the story, and he was so much impressed by the narrative that he not only ordered

the immediate restitution of her land, but also of the value of its products during the seven years of her exile.

We now come to the fulfilment of the second of the commands which Elijah had received so long before at Horeb. To complete the retribution which was yet to fall on Israel, he had been bidden to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria in the room of Benhadad. Hitherto the mandate had remained unfulfilled, because no opportunity had occurred; but the appointed time had now arrived. Elisha, for some purpose, and during an interval of peace, visited Damascus, where the visit of Naaman and the events of the Syrian wars had made his name very famous. Benhadad II., grandson or great-grandson of Rezin, after a stormy reign of some thirty years, marked by some successes, but also by the terrible reverses already recorded, lay dangerously ill. Hearing the news that the wonder-working prophet of Israel was in his capital, he sent to ask of him the question, "Shall I recover?" It had been the custom from the earliest days to propitiate the favour of prophets by presents, without which even the humblest suppliant hardly ventured to approach them.[1] The gift sent by Benhadad was truly royal, for he thought perhaps that he could purchase the intercession or the miraculous intervention of this mighty thaumaturge. He sent Hazael with a selection "of every good thing of Damascus," and, like an Eastern, he endeavoured to make his offering seem more magnificent[2] by distributing it on the backs of forty camels.

At the head of this imposing procession of camels

[1] See the cases of Samuel (1 Sam. ix. 7), of Ahijah (1 Kings xiv. 3), and of Elisha himself (2 Kings iv. 42).

[2] As Jacob did in sending forward his present to Esau. Comp. Chardin, *Voyages*, iii. 217.

walked Hazael, the commander of the forces, and stood in Elisha's presence with the humble appeal, "Thy son Benhadad, King of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?"

About the king's munificence we are told no more, but we cannot doubt that it was refused. If Naaman's still costlier blessing had been rejected, though he was about to receive through Elisha's ministration an inestimable boon, it is unlikely that Elisha would accept a gift for which he could offer no return, and which, in fact, directly or indirectly, involved the death of the sender. But the historian does not think it necessary to pause and tell us that Elisha sent back the forty camels unladen of their treasures. It was not worth while to narrate what was a matter of course. If it had been no time, a few years earlier, to receive money and garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and men-servants and maid-servants, still less was it a time to do so now. The days were darker now than they had been, and Elisha himself stood near the Great White Throne. The protection of these fearless prophets lay in their utter simplicity of soul. They rose above human fears because they stood above human desires. What Elisha possessed was more than sufficient for the needs of the plain and humble life of one whose communing was with God. It was not wonderful that prophets should rise to an elevation whence they could look down with indifference upon the superfluities of the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, when even sages of the heathen have attained to a similar independence of earthly luxuries. One who can climb such mountain-heights can look with silent contempt on gold.

But there is a serious difficulty about Elisha's answer

to the embassage. "Go, say unto him"—so it is rendered in our Authorised Version—"Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die."

It is evident that the translators of 1611 meant the emphasis to be laid on the "*mayest*," and understood the answer of Elisha to mean, "Thy recovery is quite possible; and yet"—he adds to Hazael, and not as part of his answer to the king—"Jehovah has shown me that dying he shall die,"—not indeed of this disease, but by other means before he has recovered from it.

Unfortunately, however, the Hebrew will not bear this meaning. Elisha bids Hazael to go back with the distinct message, "Thou shalt surely recover," as it is rightly rendered in the Revised Version.

This, however, is the rendering, not of the *written* text as it stands, but of the margin. Every one knows that in the Masoretic original the text itself is called the K'thîb, or "what is written," whereas the margin is called *Q'rî*, "read." Now, our translators, both those of 1611 and those of the Revision Committee, all but invariably follow the Kethîb as the most authentic reading. In this instance, however, they abandon the rule and translate the marginal reading.

What, then, is the written text?

It is the reverse of the marginal reading, for it has: "Go, say, Thou shalt *not* recover."

The reader may naturally ask the cause of this startling discrepancy.

It seems to be twofold.

(I.) Both the Hebrew word *lo*, "not" (לֹא), and the word *lo*, "to him" (לוֹ), have precisely the same pronunciation. Hence this text might mean either "Go, say *to him*, Thou shalt certainly recover," or "Go,

say, Thou shalt *not* recover." The same identity of the negative and the dative of the preposition has made nonsense of another passage of the Authorised Version, where "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and *not* increased the joy: they joy before Thee according to the joy of harvest," should be "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased *its* joy." So, too, the verse "It is He that hath made us, and *not* we ourselves," may mean "It is He that hath made us, and *to Him* we belong." In the present case the adoption of the negative (which would have conveyed to Benhadad the exact truth) is not possible; for it makes the next clause and its introduction by the word "Howbeit" entirely meaningless.

But (II.) this confusion in the text might not have arisen in the present instance but for the difficulty of Elisha's appearing to send a deliberately false message to Benhadad, and a message which he tells Hazael at the time is false.

Can this be deemed impossible?

With the views prevalent in "those times of ignorance," I think not. Abraham and Isaac, saints and patriarchs as they were, both told practical falsehoods about their wives. They, indeed, were reproved for this, though not severely; but, on the other hand, Jael is not reproved for her treachery to Sisera; and Samuel, under the semblance of a Divine permission, used a diplomatic ruse when he visited the household of Jesse; and in the apologue of Micaiah a lying spirit is represented as sent forth to do service to Jehovah; and Elisha himself tells a deliberate falsehood to the Syrians at Dothan. The sensitiveness to the duty of always speaking the exact truth is not felt in the East with anything like the intensity that it is in Christian lands;

and reluctant as we should be to find in the message of Elisha another instance of that *falsitas dispensativa* which has been so fatally patronised by some of the Fathers and by many Romish theologians, the love of truth itself would compel us to accept this view of the case, if there were no other possible interpretation.

I think, however, that another view is possible. I think that Elisha may have said to Hazael, "Go, say unto him, Thou shalt surely recover," with the same accent of irony in which Micaiah said at first to the two kings, "Go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." I think that his whole manner and the tone of his voice may have shown to Hazael, and may have been meant to show him, that this was not Elisha's real message to Benhadad. Or, to adopt the same line of explanation with an unimportant difference, Elisha may have meant to imply, "Go, follow the bent which I know you *will* follow; go, carry back to your master the lying message that I said he would recover. But that is not *my* message. My message, whether it suits your courtier instincts or not, is that Jehovah has warned me that he shall surely die."

That some such meaning as this attaches to the verse seems to be shown by the context. For not only was some reproof involved in Elisha's words, but he showed his grief still more by his manner. It was as though he had said, "Take back what message you choose, but Benhadad will certainly die"; and then he fastened his steady gaze on the soldier's countenance, till Hazael blushed and became uneasy. Only when he noted that Hazael's conscience was troubled by the glittering eyes which seemed to read the inmost

secrets of his heart did Elisha drop his glance, and burst into tears. "Why weepeth, my lord?" asked Hazael, in still deeper uneasiness. Whereupon Elisha revealed to him the future. "I weep," he said, "because I see in thee the curse and the avenger of the sins of my native land. Thou wilt become to them a sword of God; thou wilt set their fortresses on fire; thou wilt slaughter their youths; thou wilt dash their little ones to pieces against the stones; thou wilt rip up their women with child." That he actually inflicted these savageries of warfare on the miserable Israelites we are not told, but we are told that he smote them in all their coasts; that Jehovah delivered them into his hands; that he oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.[1] That being so, there can be no question that he carried out the same laws of atrocious warfare which belonged to those times and continued long afterwards. Such atrocities were not only inflicted on the Israelites again and again by the Assyrians and others,[2] but they themselves had often inflicted them, and inflicted them with what they believed to be Divine approval, on their own enemies.[3] Centuries after, one of their own poets accounted it a beatitude to him who should dash the children of the Babylonians against the stones.[4]

As the answer of Hazael is usually read and interpreted, we are taught to regard it as an indignant declaration that he could never be guilty of such vile deeds. It is regarded as though it were "an abhorrent repudiation of his future self." The lesson often drawn

[1] 2 Kings x. 32, xiii. 3, 22.
[2] Isa. xiii. 15, 16; Hos. x. 14, xiii. 16; Nah. iii. 10.
[3] See Josh. vi. 17, 21; 1 Sam. xv. 3; Lev. xxvii. 28, 29.
[4] Psalm cxxxvii. 9.

from it in sermons is that a man may live to do, and to delight in, crimes which he once hated and deemed it impossible that he should ever commit.

The lesson is a most true one, and is capable of a thousand illustrations. It conveys the deeply needed warning that those who, even in thought, dabble with wrong courses, which they only regard as venial peccadilloes, may live to commit, without any sense of horror, the most enormous offences. It is the explanation of the terrible fact that youths who once seemed innocent and holy-minded may grow up, step by step, into colossal criminals. "Men," says Scherer, "advance unconsciously from errors to faults, and from faults to crimes, till sensibility is destroyed by the habitual spectacle of guilt, and the most savage atrocities come to be dignified by the name of State policy."

> "Lui-même à son portrait forcé de rendre hommage,
> Il frémira d'horreur devant sa propre image."

But true and needful as these lessons are, they are entirely beside the mark as deduced from the story of Hazael. What he said was not, as in our Authorised Version, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" nor by "great thing" does he mean "so deadly a crime." His words, more accurately rendered in our Revision, are, "But what is thy servant, which is but a dog, that he should do this great thing?" or, "But what is the dog, thy servant?" It was a hypocritic deprecation of the future importance and eminence which Elisha had prophesied for him. There is not the least sense of horror either in his words or in his thoughts. He merely means 'A mere dog, such as I am, can never accomplish such great designs." A dog in the East is utterly

despised;[1] and Hazael, with Oriental irony, calls himself a dog, though he was the Syrian commander-in-chief—just as a Chinaman, in speaking of himself, adopts the periphrasis "this little thief."

Elisha did not notice his sham humility, but told him, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be King over Syria." The date of the event was B.C. 886.

The scene has sometimes been misrepresented to Elisha's discredit, as though he suggested to the general the crimes of murder and rebellion. The accusation is entirely untenable. Elisha was, indeed, in one sense, commissioned to anoint Hazael King of Syria, because the cruel soldier had been predestined by God to that position; but, in another sense, he had no power whatever to give to Hazael the mighty kingdom of Aram, nor to wrest it from the dynasty which had now held it for many generations. All this was brought about by the Divine purpose, in a course of events entirely out of the sphere of the humble man of God. In the transferring of this crown he was in no sense the agent or the suggester. The thought of usurpation must, without doubt, have been already in Hazael's mind. Benhadad, as far as we know, was childless. At any rate he had no natural heirs, and seems to have been a drunken king, whose reckless undertakings and immense failures had so completely alienated the affections of his subjects from himself and his dynasty, that he died undesired and unlamented, and no hand was uplifted to strike a blow in his defence. It hardly needed a prophet to foresee that the sceptre would be snatched by so strong a hand as that of Hazael from a grasp so feeble as that of Benhadad II. The utmost that Elisha had done was, under Divine guidance, to

[1] 1 Sam. xxiv. 14; 2 Sam. ix. 8.

read his character and his designs, and to tell him that the accomplishment of these designs was near at hand.

So Hazael went back to Benhadad, and in answer to the eager inquiry, "What said Elisha to thee?" he gave the answer which Elisha had foreseen that he meant to give, and which was in any case a falsehood, for it suppressed half of what Elisha had really said. "He told me," said Hazael, "that thou shouldest surely recover."

Was the sequel of the interview the murder of Benhadad by Hazael?

The story has usually been so read, but Elisha had neither prophesied this nor suggested it. The sequel is thus described. "And it came to pass on the morrow, that *he* took the coverlet,[1] and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead." The repetition of the name Hazael in the last clause is superfluous if he was the subject of the previous clause, and it has been consequently conjectured that "he took" is merely the impersonal idiom "one took." Some suppose that, as Benhadad was in the bath, his servant took the bath-cloth, wetted it, and laid its thick folds over the mouth of the helpless king; others, that he soaked the thick quilt, which the king was too weak to lift away.[2] In either case it is hardly likely that a great officer like Hazael would

[1] מַכְבֵּר. Jos., *Antt.*, IX. iv. 6, *δίκτυον διάβροχον*. Aquila, Symmachus, *τὸ στρῶμα*. Michaelis supposed it to be the mosquito-net (*κωνωπεῖον*). Comp. 1 Sam. xix. 13. Ewald suggested "bath-mattress" (iii. 523). Sir G. Grove (*s.v.* "Elisha," *Bibl. Dict.*, ii. 923) mentions that Abbas Pasha is said to have been murdered in the same manner. Some, however, think that the measure was taken by way of cure (Bruce, *Travels*, iii. 33. Klostermann, *ad loc.*, alters the text at his pleasure).

[2] 2 Kings viii. 15; LXX., *τὸ μαχβάρ*; Vulg., *stragulum*; lit., "woven cloth."

have been in the bath-room or the bed-room of the dying king. Yet we must remember that the Prætorian Præfect Macro is said to have suffocated Tiberius with his bed-clothes. Josephus says that Hazael strangled his master with a net; and, indeed, he has generally been held guilty of the perpetration of the murder. But it is fair to give him the benefit of the doubt. Be that as it may, he seems to have reigned for some forty-six years (B.C. 886–840), and to have bequeathed the sceptre to a son on whom he had bestowed the old dynastic name of Benhadad.

CHAPTER X

(1) *JEHORAM BEN-JEHOSHAPHAT OF JUDAH*

B.C. 851—843

(2) *AHAZIAH BEN-JEHORAM OF JUDAH*

B.C. 843—842

2 KINGS viii. 16—24, 25—29

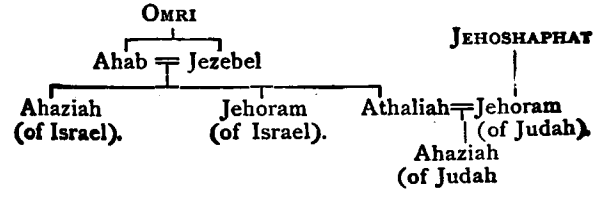
"Bear like the Turk, no brother near the throne."—POPE.

THE narrative now reverts to the kingdom of Judah, of which the historian, mainly occupied with the great deeds of the prophet in Israel, takes at this period but little notice.

He tells us that in the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel, son of Ahab, his namesake and brother-in-law, Jehoram of Judah, began to reign in Judah, though his father, Jehoshaphat, was then king.[1]

The statement is full of difficulties, especially as we have been already told (i. 17) that Jehoram ben-Ahab of Israel began to reign in the *second* year of

[1] The following genealogy may help to elucidate the troublesome identity of names:—



Jehoram ben-Jehoshaphat of Judah, and (iii. 1) in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat. It is hardly worth while to pause here to disentangle these complexities in a writer who, like most Eastern historians, is content with loose chronological references. By the current mode of reckoning, the twenty-five years of Jehoshaphat's reign may merely mean twenty-three and a month or two of two other years; and some suppose that, when Jehoram of Judah was about sixteen, his father went on the expedition against Moab, and associated his son with him in the throne. This is only conjecture. Jehoshaphat, of all kings, least needed a coadjutor, particularly so weak and worthless a one as his son; and though the association of colleagues with themselves has been common in some realms, there is not a single instance of it in the history o Israel and Judah—the case of Uzziah, who was a leper, not being to the point.[1]

The kings both of Israel and of Judah at this period, with the single exception of the brave and good Jehoshaphat, were unworthy and miserable. The blight of the Jezebel-marriage and the curse of Baal-worship lay upon both kingdoms. It is scarcely possible to find such wretched monarchs as the two sons of Jezebel—Ahaziah and Jehoram in Israel, and the son-in-law and grandson of Jezebel, Jehoram and Ahaziah, in Judah. Their respective reigns are annals of shameful apostasy, and almost unbroken disaster.

Jehoram ben-Jehoshaphat of Judah was thirty-two years old when he began his independent reign, and reigned for eight deplorable years. The fact that his mother's name is (exceptionally) omitted seems to

[1] Jotham ben-Uzziah was not the colleague of his father, but his public representative.

imply that his father Jehoshaphat set the good example of monogamy.[1] Jehoram was wholly under the influence of Athaliah, his wife, and of Jezebel, his mother-in-law, and he introduced into Judah their alien abominations. He "walked in their way, and did evil in the sight of the Lord." The Chronicler fills up the general remark by saying that he did his utmost to foster idolatry by erecting *bamoth* in the mountains of Judah, and compelled his people to worship there, in order to decentralise the religious services of the kingdom, and so to diminish the glory of the Temple. He introduced Baal-worship into Judah, and either he or his son was the guilty builder of a temple to Baalim, not only on the "opprobrious mount" on which stood the idolatrous chapels of Solomon, but on the Hill of the House itself. This temple had its own high priest, and was actually adorned with treasures torn from the Temple of Jehovah.[2] So bad was Jehoram's conduct that the historian can only attribute his non-destruction to the "covenant of salt" which God had made with David, "to give him a lamp for his children always."

But if actual destruction did not come upon him and his race, he came very near such a fate, and he certainly experienced that "the path of transgressors is hard." There is nothing to record about him but crime and catastrophe. First Edom revolted. Jehoshaphat had subdued the Edomites, and only allowed them to be governed by a vassal; now they threw off the yoke. The Jewish King advanced against them to

[1] The only other king of Judah whose mother's name is not mentioned (perhaps because his father Jotham had but one wife) is Ahaz.

[2] 2 Kings xi. 18; 2 Chron. xxi. 11, xxiv. 7.

"Zair"—by which must be meant apparently either Zoar (through which the road to Edom lay), or their capital, Mount Seir.[1] There he was surrounded by the Edomite hosts; and though by a desperate act of valour he cut his way through them at night in spite of their reserve of chariots, yet his army left him in the lurch. Edom succeeded in establishing its final independence, to which we see an allusion in the one hope held out to Esau by Isaac in that "blessing" which was practically a curse.

The loss of so powerful a subject-territory, which now constituted a source of danger on the eastern frontier of Judah, was succeeded by another disaster on the south-west, in the Shephelah or lowland plain. Here Libnah revolted,[3] and by gaining its autonomy contracted yet farther the narrow limits of the southern kingdom.

The Book of Kings tells us no more about the Jewish Jehoram, only adding that he died and was buried with his fathers, and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah. But the Book of Chronicles, which adds far darker touches to his character, also heightens to an extraordinary degree the intensity of his punishment. It tells us that he began his reign by the atrocious murder of his six younger brothers, for whom, following the old precedent of Rehoboam, Jehoshaphat had provided

[1] Vulg., *Seira*; Arab., *Sa'ir* (but the historian never uses the name Mount Seir); LXX., Σιώρ. There is perhaps some corruption in the text, and the reading of the Chronicler "with his princes" shows that it may have once been עִם־שָׂרָיו.

[2] 2 Kings viii. 21. "The people" (*i.e.*, the army of Judah) "fled to their tents." Apparently this means that they slunk away home. The word "tents" is a reminiscence of their nomad days, like the treasonable cry, "To your tents, O Israel."

[3] Josh. x. 29–39.

by establishing them as governors of various cities. As his throne was secure, we cannot imagine any motive for this brutal massacre except the greed of gain, and we can only suppose that, as Jehoram ben-Jehoshaphat became little more than a friendly vassal of his kinsmen in Israel, so he fell under the deadly influence of his wife Athaliah, as completely as his father-in-law had done under the spell of her mother Jezebel. With his brothers he also swept away a number of the chief nobles, who perhaps embraced the cause of his murdered kinsmen. Such conduct breathes the known spirit of Jezebel and of Athaliah. To rebuke him for this wickedness, he received the menace of a tremendous judgment upon his home and people in a writing from *Elijah*, whom we should certainly have assumed to be dead long before that time. The judgment itself followed. The Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah, captured Jerusalem, and murdered all Jehoram's own children, except Ahaziah, who was the youngest. Then Jehoram, at the age of thirty-eight, was smitten with an incurable disease of the bowels, of which he died two years later, and not only died unlamented, but was refused burial in the sepulchres of the kings. In any case his reign and that of his son and successor were the most miserable in the annals of Judah, as the reigns of their namesakes and kinsmen, Ahaziah ben-Ahab and Jehoram ben-Ahab, were also the most miserable in the annals of Israel.

Jehoram was succeeded on the throne of Judah by his son Ahaziah. If the chronology and the facts be correct, Ahaziah ben-Jehoram of Judah must have been born when his father was only eighteen, though he was the youngest of the king's sons, and so escaped from being massacred in the Philistine invasion. He

succeeded at the age of twenty-two, and only reigned a single year. During this year his mother, the Gebîrah Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and granddaughter of the Tyrian Ethbaal, was all-supreme. She bent the weak nature of her son to still further apostasies. She was "his counsellor to do wickedly," and her Baal-priest Mattan was more important than the Aaronic high priest of the despised and desecrated Temple. Never did Judah sink to so low a level, and it was well that the days of Ahaziah of Judah were cut short.

The only event in his reign was the share he took with his uncle Jehoram of Israel in his campaign to protect Ramoth-Gilead from Hazael. The expedition seems to have been successful in its main purpose. Ramoth-Gilead, the key to the districts of Argob and Bashan, was of immense importance for commanding the country beyond Jordan. It seems to be the same as Ramath-Mizpeh (Josh. xiii. 26); and if so, it was the spot where Jacob made his covenant with Laban. Ahab, or his successors, in spite of the disastrous end of the expedition to Ahab personally, had evidently recovered the frontier fortress from the Syrian king.[1] Its position upon a hill made its possession vital to the interests of Gilead; for the master of Ramah was the master of that Trans-Jordanic district. But Hazael had succeeded his murdered master, and was already beginning to fulfil the ruthless mission which Elisha had foreseen with tears. Jehoram ben-Ahab seems to have held his own against Hazael for a time; but in the course of the campaign at Ramoth he was so severely wounded that he was compelled to leave his army under the command of Jehu, and to return to Jezreel, to be

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. vi. 1.

healed of his wounds. Thither his nephew Ahaziah of Judah went to visit him; and there, as we shall hear, he too met his doom. That fate, the Chronicler tells us, was the penalty of his iniquities. "The destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram."

We have no ground for accusing either king of any want of courage; yet it was obviously impolitic of Jehoram to linger unnecessarily in his luxurious capital, while the army of Israel was engaged in service on a dangerous frontier. The wounds inflicted by the Syrian archers may have been originally severe. Their arrows at this time played as momentous a part in history as the cloth-yard shafts of our English bowmen which "sewed the French ranks together" at Poictiers, Creçy, and Azincour. But Jehoram had at any rate so far recovered that he could ride in his chariot; and if he had been wise and bravely vigorous, he would not have left his army under a subordinate at so perilous an epoch, and menaced by so resolute a foe. Or if he were indeed compelled to consult the better physicians at Jezreel, he should have persuaded his nephew Ahaziah of Judah—who seems to have been more or less of a vassal as well as a kinsman—to keep an eye on the beleaguered fort. Both kings, however, deserted their post,—Jehoram to recover perfect health; and Ahaziah, who had been his comrade—as their father and grandfather had gone together to the same war—to pay a state visit of condolence to the royal invalid. The army was left under a popular, resolute, and wholly unscrupulous commander, and the results powerfully affected the immediate and the ultimate destiny of both kingdoms.

CHAPTER XI

THE REVOLT OF JEHU

B.C. 842

2 KINGS ix. 1—37

"Te semper anteit sæva Necessitas
Clavos trabales et cuneos manu,
Gestans ahenâ." HORAT., *Od.*, I. xxxv. 17.

A LONG period had elapsed since Elijah had received the triple commission which was to mark the close of his career. Two of those Divine behests had now been accomplished. He had anointed Elisha, son of Shaphat, of Abel-Meholah, to be prophet in his room;[1] and Elisha had anointed Hazael to be king over Syria;[2] the third and more dangerous commission, involving nothing less than the overthrow of the mighty dynasty of Omri, remained still unaccomplished.

If the name of Jehu ("Jehovah is He")[3] had been actually mentioned to Elijah, the dreadful secret must have remained buried in the breast of the prophet and in that of his successor for many years. Further, Jehu was yet a very young man, and to have marked him out as the founder of a dynasty would have been to doom him to certain destruction. An Eastern king,

[1] 1 Kings xix. 15, 16.

[2] 2 Kings viii. 12, 13.

[3] The name was not uncommon, 1 Chron. ii. 38, iv. 35, xii. 3.

whose family has once securely seated itself on the throne, is hedged round with an awful divinity, and demands an unquestioning obedience. Elijah had been removed from earth before this task had been fulfilled, and Elisha had to wait for his opportunity. But the doom was passed, though the judgment was belated. The sons of Ahab were left a space to repent, or to fill to the brim the cup of their father's iniquities.

> "The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite,
> Nor yet doth linger."

Ahaziah, Ahab's eldest son, after a reign of one year, marked only by crimes and misfortunes, had ended in overwhelming disaster his deplorable career. His brother Jehoram had succeeded him, and had now been on the throne for at least twelve years, which had been chiefly signalised by that unsuccessful attempt to recover the territory of revolted Moab, to which we owe the celebrated Stone of Mesha. We have already narrated the result of the campaign which had so many vicissitudes. The combined armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom had been delivered by the interposition of Elisha from perishing of thirst beside the scorched-up bed of the Wady-el-Ahsy ; and availing themselves of the rash assault of the Moabites, had swept everything before them. But Moab stood at bay at Kir-Haraseth (Kerak), his strongest fortress, six miles from Ar or Rabbah, and ten miles east of the southern end of the Dead Sea. It stood three thousand feet above the level of the sea, and is defended by a network of steep valleys. Nevertheless, Israel would have subdued it, but for the act of horrible despair to which the King of Moab resorted in his extremity, by offering up his eldest son as a burnt-offering to Chemosh upon the wall of the

city. Horror-stricken by the catastrophe, and terrified with the dread that the vengeance of Chemosh could not but be aroused by so tremendous a sacrifice, the besieging host had retired. From that moment Moab had not only been free, but assumed the *rôle* of an aggressor, and sent her marauding bands to harry and carry the farms and homesteads of her former conqueror.[1]

Then followed the aggressions of Benhadad which had been frustrated by the insight of Elisha, and which owed their temporary cessation to his generosity.[2] The reappearance of the Syrians in the field had reduced Samaria to the lowest depths of ghastly famine. But the day of the guilty city had not yet come, and a sudden panic, caused among the invaders by a rumoured assault of Hittites and Egyptians, had saved her from destruction.[3] Taking advantage of the respite caused by the change of the Syrian dynasty, and pressing on his advantage, Jehoram, with the aid of his Judæan nephew, had once more got possession of Ramoth-Gilead before Hazael was secure on the throne which he had usurped.

This then was the situation :—The allied and kindred kings of Israel and Judah were idling in the pomp of hospitality at Jezreel; their armies were encamped about Ramoth-Gilead; and at the head of the host of Israel was the crafty and vehement grandson of Nimshi.

Elisha saw and seized his opportunity. The day of vengeance from the Lord had dawned. Things had not materially altered since the days of Ahab. If Jehovah

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 20, xxiv. 2; Jer. xlviii.
[2] 2 Kings vi. 8-23.
[3] 2 Kings vii. 6.

was nominally worshipped, if the very names of the kings of Israel bore witness to His supremacy,[1] Baal was worshipped too. The curse which Elijah had pronounced against Ahab and his house remained unfulfilled. The credit of prophecy was at stake. The blood of Naboth and his slaughtered sons cried to the Lord from the ground; and hitherto it seemed to have cried in vain. If the *Nebîîm* (the prophetic class) were to have their due weight in Israel, the hour had come, and the man was ready.

The light which falls on Elisha is dim and intermittent. His name is surrounded by a halo of nebulous wonders, of which many are of a private and personal character. But he was a known enemy of Ahab and his house. He had, indeed, more than once interposed to snatch them from ruin, as in the expedition against Moab, and in the awful straits of the siege of Samaria by the Syrians. But his person had none the less been hateful to the sons of Jezebel, and his life had been endangered by their bursts of sudden fury. He could hardly again have a chance so favourable as that which now offered itself, when the armed host was at one place and the king at another. Perhaps, too, he may have been made aware that the soldiers were not well pleased to find at their head a king who was so far a *fainéant* as to leave them exposed to a powerful enemy, and show no eagerness to return. His "urgent private affairs" were not so urgent as to entitle him to take his ease at luxurious Jezreel.

Where Elisha was at the time we do not know—perhaps at Dothan, perhaps at Samaria. Suddenly he called to him a youth—one of the Sons of the Prophets, on whose speed and courage he could rely—placed in

[1] **Jehoram** = Jehovah is exalted. Ahaziah = Jehovah holds.

his hands a vial of the consecrated anointing oil,[1] told him to gird up his loins,[2] and to speed across the Jordan to Ramoth-Gilead. When he arrived, he was to bid Jehu rise up from the company of his fellow-captains to hurry him into "a chamber within a chamber,"[3] to shut the door for secrecy, to pour the consecrating oil upon his head, to anoint him King of Israel in the name of Jehovah, and then to fly without a moment's delay.[4]

The messenger—the Rabbis guess that he was Jonah, the son of Amittai[5]—knew well that his was a service of immense peril, in which his life might easily pay the forfeit of his temerity. How was he to guess that at once, without striking a blow, the host of Israel would fling to the winds its sworn allegiance to the son of the warrior Ahab, the fourth monarch of the powerful dynasty of Omri? Might not any one of a thousand possible accidents thwart a conspiracy of which the success depended on the unflinching courage and promptitude of his single hand?

He was but a youth, but he was the trained pupil of a master who had, again and again, stood before kings, and not been afraid. He sprang from a community which inherited the splendid traditions of the Prophet of Flame.

He did not hesitate a moment. He tightened the camel's hide round his naked limbs, flung back the

[1] Vial (*pak*) only here and in 1 Sam. x. 1. "*The* oil" (LXX., *τὸν φακὸν τοῦ ἐλαίου*).

[2] "His habit fit for speed *succinct*" (Milton).

[3] Inner chamber, 1 Kings xx. 30.

[4] Perhaps, if Elisha had gone in person, suspicion might have been aroused. He was not more than fifty at this time, and lived forty-three years more.

[5] *Seder Olam*, c. 18.

long dark locks of the Nazarite, and sped upon his way. A true son of the schools of Jehovah's prophets has, and can have, no fear of man. The armies of Israel and Judah saw the wild, flying figure of a young man, with his hairy garment and streaming locks, rush through the camp. Whatever might be their surmisings, he brooked no questions. Availing himself of the awe with which the shadow of Elijah had covered the sacrosanct person of a prophetic messenger, he made his way straight to the war-council of the captains; and brushing aside every attempt to impede his progress with the plea that he was the bearer of Jehovah's message, he burst into the council of the astonished warriors, who were assembled in the private courtyard of a house in the fortress-town.[1]

He knew the fame of Jehu, but did not know his person, and dared not waste time. "I have an errand to thee, O captain," he said to the assembly generally. The message had been addressed to no one in particular, and Jehu naturally asked, "Unto which of all of us?" With the same swift intuition which has often enabled men in similar circumstances to recognise a leader—as Josephus recognised Vespasian, and St. Severinus recognised Odoacer, and Joan of Arc recognised Charles VI. of France—he at once replied, "To thee, O captain." Jehu did not hesitate a moment. Prophets had shown, many a time, that their messages might not be neglected or despised. He rose, and followed the youth, who led him into the most secret recess of the house, and there, emptying on his head the fragrant oil of consecration, said, "Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel, I have anointed thee

[1] It seems as though they were *inside* the town to defend it, not a beleaguring host outside.

king over the people of Jehovah, even over Israel."[1] He was to smite the house of his master Ahab in vengeance for the blood of Jehovah's prophets and servants whom Jezebel had murdered. Ahab's house, every male of it, young and old, bond and free,[2] is doomed to perish, as the houses of Jeroboam and of Baasha had perished before them, by a bloody end. Further, the dogs should eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel,[3] and there should be none to bury her.

One moment sufficed for his daring deed, for his burning message; the next he had flung open the door and fled. The soldiers of the camp must have whispered still more anxiously together as they saw the same agitated youth rushing through their lines with the same impetuosity which had marked his entrance. In those dark days the sudden appearance of a prophet was usually the herald of some terrific storm.[4]

Jehu was utterly taken by surprise; but according to the reading preserved by Ephraem Syrus in 2 Kings ix. 26, he had on the previous night seen in a dream the blood of Naboth and his sons. If the thought of revolt had ever passed for a moment through his mind, it had never assumed a definite shape. True, he had

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[1] The expression is remarkable, as showing how completely the prerogative of the Chosen People was supposed to rest with the Ten Tribes, as the most important representatives of the seed of Abraham.

[2] "Him that is shut up, and him that is left at large in Israel" (2 Kings ix. 8; 1 Kings xiv. 10, xvi. 3, 4).

[3] The A.V. has, less accurately, "in the *portion* of Jezreel." See 1 Kings xxi. 23. Heb., חֶלְקַת. The חֵיל of an Eastern town is the ditch and empty space—a sort of external *pomœrium* around it. It is the place of offal, and the haunt of vultures and pariah dogs.

[4] 1 Sam. xvi. 4: "Comest thou peaceably?"

been a warrior from his youth. True, he had been one of Ahab's bodyguard, and had ridden before him in a chariot at least twenty years earlier, and had now risen by valour and capacity to the high station of captain of the host. True, also, that he had heard the great curse which Elijah had pronounced on Ahab at the door of Naboth's vineyard; but he heard it while he was yet an obscure youth, and he had little dreamed that his was the hand which should carry it into execution. Who was he? And had not the house of Omri been, in some sense, sanctioned by Heaven? And were not the words of the prophet "wild and wandering cries," of which the issues might be averted by such a repentance as that of Ahab?

And he felt another misgiving. Might not this scene be the plot of some secret enemy? Might it not at any rate be a reckless jest palmed upon him by his comrades? If any jealous member of the confederacy of captains betrayed the fact that Jehu had tampered with their allegiance, would his head be safe for a single hour? He would act warily. He came back to his fellow-captains and said nothing.

But they were burning with curiosity. Something must be impending. Prophets did not rush in thus tumultuously for no purpose. Must not the youth's mantle of hair be some standard of war?

"Is all right?" they shouted. "Why did this frantic fellow come to thee?"[1]

"You know all about it," answered Jehu, with wary coolness. "You know more about it than I do. You know the man, and what his talk was."

[1] 2 Kings ix. 11, הַמְשֻׁגָּע. LXX., ὁ ἐπίληπτος. Comp. ver. 20, "he driveth *furiously*" (בְּשִׁגָּעוֹן)

"Lies!" bluntly answered the rough soldiers.[1] "Tell us now."

Then Jehu's eye took measure of them and their feelings. A judge of men and of men's countenances, he saw conspiracy flashing in their faces. He saw that they suspected the true state of things, and were on fire to carry it out. Perhaps they had caught sight of the vial of oil under the youth's scant dress. Could any quickened observation at least fail to notice that the soldier's dark locks were shining and fragrant, as they had not been a moment ago, with consecrated oil?

Then Jehu frankly told them the perilous secret. Thus and thus had the young prophet spoken, and had said, "Thus saith Jehovah, I have anointed thee king over Israel."

The message was met with a shout of answering approbation. That shout was the death-knell of the house of Omri. It showed that the reigning dynasty had utterly forfeited its popularity. No luck had followed the sons of Naboth's murderer. Israel was weary of their mother Jezebel. Why was this king Jehoram, this king of evil auspices, who had been repudiated by Moab and harried by Syria—why, in the first gleam of possible prosperity, was he being detained at Jezreel by wounds which rumour said were already sufficiently healed to allow him to return to his post? Down with the seed of the murderer and the sorceress! Let brave Jehu be king, as Jehovah has said!

So the captains sprang to their feet, and then and there seized Jehu, and carried him in triumph to the top of the stairs which ran round the inside of the courtyard, and stripped off their mantles to extemporise

[1] Ver. 12, a lie! (שֶׁקֶר).

for him the semblance of a cushioned throne.[1] Then in the presence of such soldiers as they could trust they blew a sudden blast of the ram's horn, and shouted, "Jehu is king!"

Jehu was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet. Nothing tries a man's vigour and nerve so surely as a sudden crisis. It is this swift resolution which has raised many a man to the throne, as it raised Otho, and Napoleon I. and Napoleon III. The history of Israel is specially full of *coups d'état*, but no one of them is half so decisive or overwhelming as this. Jehu instantly accepted the office of Jehovah's avenger on the house of Ahab.[2] Everything, as Jehu saw, depended on the suddenness and fury with which the blow was delivered. "If you want me to be your king,"[3] he said, "keep the lines secure, and guard the fortress walls. I will be my own messenger to Jehoram. Let no deserter go forth to give him warning."[4]

It was agreed; and Jehu, only taking with him Bidkar, his fellow-officer, and a small band of followers, set forth at full speed from Ramoth-Gilead.

The fortress of Ramoth, now the important town of Es-Salt, a place which must always have been the key

[1] What is meant by the *gerem* of the staircase is uncertain. The word means "a bone" (Aquila, ὀστῶδες), and is, in this connection, an ἅπαξ λεγόμενον. The Targum explains it as the top vane of a stair-dial. The margin of the R.V. renders it "on the bare steps." The Vulgate renders it *in similitudinem tribunalis*, as though *gerem* meant *tselem*. The LXX. conceal their perplexity by simply translating the word *ἐπὶ τὸ γαρέμ*. Grotius and Clericus, *in fastigio graduum*. Symmachus, *ἐπὶ μίαν τῶν ἀναβαθμίδων*.

[2] 2 Kings ix. 14: "So Jehu *conspired* against Joram." The same word is used in 2 Chron. xxiv. 25, 26.

[3] 2 Kings ix. 15, R.V: "If this be your mind."

[4] So far as we know, he never returned to Ramoth-Gilead, of which indeed we hear no more.

of Gilead, was built on the summit of a rocky headland, fortified by nature as well as by art. It is south of the river Jabbok, and lies at the head of the only easy road which runs down westward to the Jordan and eastward to the rich plateau of the interior.[1] Crossing the fords of the Jordan, Jehu would soon be able to join the main road, which, passing Tirzah, Zaretan, and Beth-shean, and sweeping eastward of Mount Gilboa, gives ready access to Jezreel.

The watchman on the lofty watchtower of the summer palace caught sight of a storm of dust careering along from the eastward up the valley towards the city.[2] The times were wild and troublous. What could it be? He shouted his alarm, "I see a troop!" The tidings were startling, and the king was instantly informed that chariots and horsemen were approaching the royal city. "Send a horseman to meet them," he said, "with the message, 'Is all well?'"

Forth flew the rider, and cried to the rushing escort, "The king asks, 'Is all well? Is it peace?" For probably the anxious city hoped that there might have been some victory of the army against Hazael, which would fill them with joy.

"What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me," answered Jehu; and perforce the horseman, whatever may have been his conjectures, had to follow in the rear.

"He reached them," cried the sentry on the watch-tower, "but he does not return."

The news was enigmatical and alarming; and the

[1] Tristram, *Land of Moab.*

[2] Heb., *Shiph'hath*, "a dust-storm" (LXX., κονιορτόν, *al.* ὄχλον; Vulg., *globum*), not as in A.V. and R.V., "a company." Comp. Isa. lx. 6; Ezek. xxvi. 10.

troubled king sent another horseman. Again the same colloquy occurred, and again the watchman gave the ominous message, adding to it the yet more perplexing news that, in the mad and headlong driving[1] of the charioteer, he recognises the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi.[2]

What had happened to his army? Why should the captain of the host be driving thus furiously to Jezreel?

Matters were evidently very critical, whatever the swift approach of chariots and horsemen might portend. "Yoke my chariot," said Jehoram; and his nephew Ahaziah, who had shared his campaign, and was no less consumed with anxiety to learn tidings which could not but be pressing, rode by him in another chariot to meet Jehu. They took with them no escort worth mentioning. The rebellion was not only sudden, but wholly unexpected.

The two kings met Jehu in a spot of the darkest omen. It was the plot of ground which had once been the vineyard of Naboth, at the door of which Ahab had heard from Elijah the awful message of his doom. As the New Forest was ominous to our early Norman kings as the witness of their cruelties and encroachments, so was this spot to the house of Omri, though it was adjacent to their ivory palace, and had been transformed from a vineyard into a garden or pleasance.

"Is it peace, Jehu?" shouted the agitated king; by

[1] Clearly the rendering "he driveth furiously" is right. The word "furiously" is *beshigga'ôn* (Vulg., *præceps*), and is connected with "mad," ver. 11. LXX., ἐν παραλλαγῇ. Arab. Chald., "quietly." Josephus, "leisurely, and in good order." Such an approach would not, however, have been at all in accordance with the perilous urgency of his intent.

[2] Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, is named from his grandfather Nimshi, who seems to have been the founder of the greatness of his house.

which probably he only meant to ask, "Is all going well in the army at Ramoth?"

The fierce answer which burst from the lips of his general fatally undeceived him. "What peace," brutally answered the rebel, "so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" She, after all, was the *fons et origo mali* to the house of Jehoram. Hers was the dark spirit of murder and idolatry which had walked in that house. She was the instigator and the executer of the crime against Naboth. She had been the foundress of Baal- and Asherah-worship; she was the murderess of the prophets; she had been specially marked out for vengeance in the doom pronounced both by Elijah and Elisha.

The answer was unmistakable. This was a revolt, a revolution. "Treachery, Ahaziah!" shouted the terrified king, and instantly wheeled round his chariot to flee.[1] But not so swiftly as to escape the Nemesis which had been stealing upon him with leaden feet, but now smote him irretrievably with iron hand. Without an instant's hesitation, Jehu snatched his bow from his attendant charioteer, "filled his hands with it," and from its full stretch and resonant string sped the arrow, which smote Jehoram in the back with fatal force, and passed through his heart.[2] Without a word the unhappy king sank down upon his knees[3] in his chariot, and fell face forward, dead.

"Take him up," cried Jehu to Bidkar,[4] "and fling him down where he is,—here in this portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. Here, years ago, you

[1] 2 Kings ix. 23: "Turned his hands." Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 34.

[2] Ver. 24. Vulg., *inter scapulas.* [3] LXX., reading עַל בִּרְכָּיו.

[4] Bidkar, perhaps Bar-dekar, "Son of stabbing." Comp. 1 Kings iv. 9.

and I, as we rode behind Ahab,[1] heard Elijah utter his oracle on this man's father, that vengeance should meet him here. Where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth and his sons, let dogs lick the blood of the son of Ahab."[2]

But Jehu was not the man to let the king's murder stay his chariot-wheels when more work had yet to be done. Ahaziah of Judah, too, belonged to Ahab's house, for he was Ahab's grandson, and Jehoram's nephew and ally. Without stopping to mourn or avenge the tragedy of his uncle's murder, Ahaziah fled towards Bethgan or Engannim,[3] the fountain of gardens, south of Jezreel, on the road to Samaria and Jerusalem. Jehu gave the laconic order, "Smite him also";[4] but fright added wings to the speed of the hapless King of Judah. His chariot-steeds were royal steeds, and were fresh; those of Jehu were spent with the long, fierce drive from Ramoth. He got as far as the ascent of Gur before he was overtaken.[5] There, not far from Ibleam, the rocky hill impeded his flight, and he was wounded by the pursuers. But he managed to struggle onwards to Megiddo, on the south of the plain of Jezreel, and there he hid himself.[6] He was discovered, dragged

[1] Heb., *ts'madim*, "in pairs"; LXX., *ἐπιβεβηκότες ἐπὶ ζεύγη*. It is uncertain whether Jehu and Bidkar were in the same chariot as Ahab, as Josephus says (*καθεζομένους ὄπισθεν τοῦ ἅρματος*), or in a separate chariot.

[2] 2 Kings ix. 26: "Saith the Lord." Ephraem Syrus omits these words. He says that the night before Jehu had seen the blood of Naboth and his sons in a dream. Comp. Hom., *Od.*, iii. 258: *Τῷ κε οἱ οὐδὲ θανόντι χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχευαν Ἀλλ' ἄρα τύνγε κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατέδαψαν Κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ.*

[3] A.V., "By the way of the garden-house." LXX., *Βαιθγάν*.

[4] The text is a little uncertain.

[5] Thenius supposes "Gur" to mean "a caravanserai." Comp. 2 Chron. xxvi. 7, *Gur-Baal*; Vulg., *Hospitium Baalis*.

[6] The account of the Chronicler (2 Chron. xxii. 9) differs from that of the earlier historian. It may, however, be (uncertainly) reconciled

out, and slain. Even Jehu's fierce emissaries did not make war on dead bodies, any more than Hannibal did, or Charles V. They left such meanness to Jehu himself, and to our Charles II. They did not interfere with the dead king's remains. His servants carried them to Jerusalem, and there he was buried with his fathers in the sepulchre of the kings, in the city of David. As there was nothing more to tell about him, the historian omits the usual formula about the rest of the acts of Ahaziah, and all that he did. His death illustrates the proverb *Mitgegangen mitgefangen*: he was the comrade of evil men, and he perished with them.

Jehu speedily reached Jezreel, but the interposition of Jehoram and the orders for the pursuit of Ahaziah had caused a brief delay, and Jezebel had already been made aware that her doom was imminent.

Not even the sudden and dreadful death of her son, and the nearness of her own fate, daunted the steely heart of the Tyrian sorceress. If she was to die, she would meet death like a queen. As though for some Court banquet, she painted her eyelashes and eyebrows with antimony, to make her eyes look large and lustrous,[1] and put on her jewelled head-dress.[2] Then she

with it as in the text, if we suppose the words "he was hid in Samaria" to mean in Megiddo, in the territory of Samaria. Obviously, however, the traditions varied. There are difficulties about the story, for Ibleam is on the west towards Megiddo, and not between Jezreel and Samaria.

[1] פּוּךְ, "Lead-glance." A mixture of pulverised antimony (*stibium*) and zinc is still used by women in the East for this purpose. *In calliblepharis dilatat oculos* (Plin., *H. N.*, xxxiii.). Keren-Happuk, the name given by Job to one of his daughters, means "horn of stibium." The object could hardly have been to *attract* Jehu (as Ephraem Syrus thinks), for Jezebel had already a *grandson* twenty-three years old (viii. 26).

[2] A.V., "*Tired* her head." Comp. *tiara*. Lit., "made good"; LXX., ἠγάθυνε.

mounted the palace tower, and, looking down through the lattice above the city gate, watched the thundering advance of Jehu's chariot, and hailed the triumphant usurper with the bitterest insult she could devise. She knew that Omri, her husband's father, had taken swift vengeance on the guilt of the usurper Zimri, who had been forced to burn himself in the harem at Tirzah after one month's troubled reign. Her shrill voice was heard above the roar of the chariot-wheels in the ominous taunt,—

"Is it peace, thou Zimri, thou murderer of thy master?"[1]

No!—She meant, "There is no peace for thee nor thine, any more than for me or mine! Thou mayest murder us; but thee too, thy doom awaiteth!"

Stung by the ill-omened words, Jehu looked up at her and shouted,—

"Who is on my side? Who?"

The palace was apparently rife with traitors. Ahab had been the first polygamist among the kings of Israel, and therefore the first also to introduce the odious atrocity of eunuchs. Those hapless wretches, the portents of Eastern seraglios, the disgrace of humanity, are almost always the retributive enemies of the societies of which they are the helpless victims. Fidelity or gratitude are rarely to be looked for from natures warped into malignity by the ruthless misdoing of men. Nor was the nature of Jezebel one to inspire affection. One or two eunuchs[2] immediately thrust out of the

[1] Josephus gives the sense very well: Καλὸς δοῦλος ὁ ἀποκτείνας τὸν δεσπότην (*Antt.*, IX. vi. 4). The same question might have been addressed to Baasha, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea; but at least Jehu might plead a prophet's call.

[2] "Two or three." Lit., "two three," like the old English "two three" for "several."

windows their bloated and beardless faces. "Fling her down!" Jehu shouted. Down they flung the wretched queen (has any queen ever died a death so shamelessly ignominious?), and her blood spirted upon the wall, and on the horses. Jehu, who had only stopped for an instant in his headlong rush, drove his horses over her corpse,[1] and entered the gate of her capital with his wheels crimson with her blood. History records scarcely another instance of such a scene, except when Tullia, a century later, drove her chariot over the dead body of her father Servius Tullius in the *Vicus Sceleratus* of ancient Rome.[2]

But what cared Jehu? Many a conqueror ere now has sat down to the dinner prepared for his enemy; and the obsequious household of the dead tyrants, ready to do the bidding of their new lord, ushered the hungry man to the banquet provided for the kings whom he had slain. No man dreamt of uttering a wail; no man thought of raising a finger for dead Jehoram or for dead Jezebel, though they had all been under *her* sway for at least five-and-thirty years. "The wicked perish, and no man regardeth." "When the wicked perish, there is shouting."[3]

We may be startled at a revolution so sudden and so complete; yet it is true to history. A tyrant or a cabal may oppress a nation for long years. Their word may be thought absolute, their power irresistible. Tyranny seems to paralyse the courage of resistance, like the fabled head of Medusa. Remove its fascination

[1] Ver. 33. Heb., "He trod her underfoot." LXX., Συνεπάτησαν αὐτήν; Vulg., *Conculcaverunt eam.*

[2] Liv., i. 46–48.

[3] Prov. xi. 10. Compare the remark of Voltaire, who saw "le peuple ivré de vin et de joie de la mort de Louis XIV."

of corruption, and men become men, and not machines, once more. Jehu's daring woke Israel from the lethargy which had made her tolerate the murders and enchantments of this Baal-worshipping alien. In the same way in one week Robespierre seemed to be an invincible autocrat; the next week his power had crumbled into dust and ashes at a touch.

It was not until Jehu had sated his thirst and hunger after that wild drive, which had ended in the murder of two kings and a queen and in his sudden elevation to a throne, that it even occurred to this new tiger-king to ask what had become of Jezebel. But when he had eaten and drunk, he said, "Go, see now to this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter." That she had been first Princess, then Queen, then Gebîrah in Israel for nearly a full lifetime was nothing: it was nothing to Jehu that she was a wife, and mother, and grandmother of kings and queens both of Israel and Judah;—but she was also the daughter of Ethbaal, the priest-king of Tyre and Sidon, and therefore any shameful treatment of her remains might kindle trouble from the region of Phœnicia.[1]

But no one had taken the trouble so much as to look after the corpse of Jezebel. The populace of Jezreel were occupied with their new king. Where Jezebel fell, there she had been suffered to lie; and no one, apparently, cared even to despoil her of the royal robes, now saturated with bloodshed. Flung from the palace-tower, her body had fallen in the open space just outside the walls—what is called "the mounds" of an Eastern city. In the strange carelessness of sanitation which

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 31. At this time Ethbaal was dead. He reigned probably from B.C. 940–908, and died at the age of sixty-eight (Jos., *Antt.*, VIII. xiii. 1, IX. vi. 6; *c. Ap.*, i. 18).

describes as "fate" even the visitation of an avoidable pestilence, all sorts of offal are shot into this vacant space to fester in the tropic heat. I myself have seen the pariah dogs and the vultures feeding on a ghastly dead horse in a ruined space within the street of Beit-Dejun; and the dogs and the vultures—"those national undertakers"—had done their work unbidden on the corpse of the Tyrian queen. When men went to bury her, they only found a few dog-mumbled bones—the skull, and the feet, and the palms of the hands.[1] They brought the news to Jehu as he rested after his feast. It did not by any means discompose him. He at once recognised that another levin-bolt had fallen from the thunder-crash of Elijah's prophecy, and he troubled himself about the matter no further. Her carcase, as the man of God had prophesied, had become as dung upon the face of the field, so that none could say, "This is Jezebel."[2]

[1] 1 Kings xxi. 23.

[2] Comp. Psalm lxxxiii. 10. Her name remained a by-word till the latest days (Rev. ii. 20), and the Spanish Jews called their persecutress Isabella the Catholic "Jezebel."

CHAPTER XII

JEHU ESTABLISHED ON THE THRONE

B.C. 842—814

2 KINGS X. 1—17

"The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose."
SHAKESPEARE.

BUT the work of Jehu was not yet over. He was established at Jezreel; he was lord of the palace and seraglio of his master; the army of Israel was with him. But who could be sure that no civil war would arise, as between the partisans of Zimri and Omri, as between Omri and Tibni? Ahab, first of the kings of Israel, had left many sons. There were no less than seventy of these princes at Samaria. Might there not be among them some youth of greater courage and capacity than the murdered Jehoram? And could it be anticipated that the late dynasty was so utterly unfortunate and execrated as to have none left to do them reverence, or to strike one blow on their behalf, after more than half a century of undisputed sway?[1] Jehu's *coup de main* had been brilliantly successful. In one day he had leapt into the throne. But Samaria was strong upon its watch-tower hill. It was full of Ahab's sons, and had not yet declared on Jehu's side. It might

[1] Omri, 12 years; Ahab, 22; Ahaziah, 18; Jehoram, 12.

be expected to feel some gratitude to the dynasty which Jehu had supplanted, seeing that it owed to the grandfather of the king whom he had just slain its very existence as the capital of Israel.

He would put a bold face on his usurpation, and strike while the iron was hot. He would not rouse opposition by seeming to assume that Samaria would accept his rebellion. He therefore wrote a letter to the rulers of Samaria[1]—which was but a journey of nine hours' distance from Jezreel—and to the guardians of the young princes, reminding them that they were masters in a strong city, protected with its own contingent of chariots and horses, and well supplied with armour. He suggested that they should select the most promising of Ahab's sons, make him king, and begin a civil war on his behalf.

The event showed how prudent was this line of conduct. As yet Jehu had not transferred the army from Ramoth-Gilead. He had doubtless taken good care to prevent intelligence of his plans from reaching the adherents of Jehoram in Samaria. To them the unknown was the terrible. All they knew was that "Behold, two kings stood not before him!" The army must have sanctioned his revolt: what chance had they? As for loyalty and affection, if ever they had existed towards this hapless dynasty, they had vanished like a dream. The people of Samaria and Jezreel had once been obedient as sheep to the iron dominance of Jezebel. They had tolerated her idol-abominations, and the insolence of her army of dark-browed priests.

[1] The reading of 2 Kings x. 1, "Unto the rulers of *Jezreel*," is clearly wrong. The LXX. reads, "Unto the rulers of Samaria." Unless "Jezreel" be a clerical error for Israel, we must read, "He sent letters from Jezreel unto the rulers of Samaria."

They had not risen to defend the prophets of Jehovah, and had suffered even Elijah, twice over, to be forced to flee for his life. They had borne, hitherto without a murmur, the tragedies, the sieges, the famines, the humiliations, with which during these reigns they had been familiar. And was not Jehovah against the waning fortunes of the Beni-Omri? Elijah had undoubtedly cursed them, and now the curse was falling. Jehu must doubtless have let it be known that he was only carrying out the behest of their own citizen the great Elisha, who had sent to him the anointing oil. They could find abundant excuses to justify their defection from the old house, and they sent to the terrible man a message of almost abject submission :— Let him do as he would; they would make no king: they were his servants, and would do his bidding.

Jehu was not likely to be content with verbal or even written promises. He determined, with cynical subtlety, to make them put a very bloody sign-manual to their treaty, by implicating them irrevocably in his rebellion. He wrote them a second mandate.

"If," he said, "ye accept my rule, prove it by your obedience. Cut off the heads of your master's sons, and see that they are brought to me here to-morrow by yourselves before the evening."

The ruthless order was fulfilled to the letter by the terrified traitors. The king's sons were with their tutors, the lords of the city. On the very morning that Jehu's second missive arrived, every one of these poor guiltless youths was unceremoniously beheaded. The hideous, bleeding trophies were packed in fig-baskets and sent to Jezreel.[1]

[1] **Fig-baskets,** Jer. xxiv. 2. The word *dudim* is rendered "pots"

When Jehu was informed of this revolting present it was evening, and he was sitting at a meal with his friends.[1] He did not trouble himself to rise from his feast or to look at "death made proud by pure and princely beauty." He knew that those seventy heads could only be the heads of the royal youths. He issued a cool and brutal order that they should be piled in two heaps[2] until the morning on either side the entrance of the city gates. Were they watched? or were the dogs and vultures and hyænas again left to do their work upon them? We do not know. In any case it was a scene of brutal barbarism such as might have been witnessed in living memory in Khiva or Bokhara;[3] nor must we forget that even in the last century the heads of the brave and the noble rotted on Westminster Hall and Temple Bar, and over the Gate of York, and over the Tolbooth at Edinburgh, and on Wexford Bridge.

The day dawned, and all the people were gathered at the gate, which was the scene of justice. With the calmest air imaginable the warrior came out to them, and stood between the mangled heads of those who but yesterday had been the pampered minions of fortune and luxury. His speech was short and politic in its brutality. "Be yourselves the judges," he said. "Ye are righteous. Jezebel called me a Zimri. Yes! I conspired against my master and slew him: but"—and here he casually pointed to the horrible, bleeding heaps—"who smote all these?" The people of Jezreel

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in 1 Sam. ii. 14. LXX., *ἐν καρτάλλοις*; Vulg., *in cophinis*. In Psalm lxxxi. 6 the LXX. has *ἐν τῳ κοφίνῳ*.

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. vi. 5.

[2] Heb., *Tsibourim*; LXX., *βουνούς*.

[3] Comp. 1 Sam. xvii. 54; 2 Macc. xv. 30.

and the lords of Samaria were not only passive witnesses of his rebellion; they were active sharers in it. They had dabbled their hands in the same blood. Now they could not choose but accept his dynasty: for who was there besides himself? And then, changing his tone, he does not offer "the tyrant's devilish plea, necessity," to cloak his atrocities, but—like a Romish inquisitor of Seville or Granada—claims Divine sanction for his sanguinary violence. This was not *his* doing. He was but an instrument in the hands of fate. Jehovah is alone responsible. He is doing what He spake by His servant Elijah. Yes! and there was yet more to do; for no word of Jehovah's shall fall to the ground.

With the same cynical ruthlessness, and cold indifference to smearing his robes in the blood of the slain, he carried out to the bitter end his task of policy which he gilded with the name of Divine justice. Not content with slaying Ahab's sons, he set himself to extirpate his race, and slew all who remained to him in Jezreel, not only his kith and kin, but every lord and every Baal-priest who favoured his house, until he left him none remaining.

But what a frightful picture do these scenes furnish us of the state of religion and even of civilisation in Jezreel! There was this man-eating tiger of a king wallowing in the blood of princes, and enacting scenes which remind us of Dahomey and Ashantee, or of some Tartary khanate where human hands are told out in the market-place after some avenging raid. And amid all this savagery, squalor, and Turkish atrocity, the man pleads the sanction of Jehovah, and claims, unrebuked, that he is only carrying out the behests of Jehovah's prophets! It is not until long

afterwards that the voice of a prophet is heard repudiating his plea and denouncing his bloodthirstiness.

"An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek—
A goodly apple rotten at the core."

[1] Hos. i. 4.

CHAPTER XIII

FRESH MURDERS—THE EXTIRPATION OF BAAL-WORSHIP (B.C. 842)

2 KINGS X. 12—28

"Jéhu, sur les hauts lieux, enfin osant offrir
Un téméraire encens que Dieu ne peut souffrir,
N'a pour servir sa cause et venger ses injures
Ni le cœur assez droit, ni les mains assez pures."

RACINE.

AFTER such abject subservience had been shown him by the lords of Samaria and Jezreel, Jehu evidently had no further shadow of apprehension. He seems to have loved blood for its own sake—to have been seized by a vertigo of blood-poisoning. Having waded through slaughter to a throne, he loved to wash his footsteps in the blood of the slain, and to stretch to the very uttermost—to stretch until it cracked all its ravelled threads—the Divine sanction claimed by his fanaticism or his hypocrisy.

When he had finished his massacres at Jezreel, he went to Samaria. It was only a journey of a few hours. On the high road he met a company of travellers, whose escort and rich apparel showed that they were persons of importance. They were about to halt, perhaps for refreshment, at the shearing-house of the

shepherds—the place in which the sheep were gathered before they were shorn.[1]

"Who are ye?" he asked.

They answered that they were princes of the house of Judah, the brethren of Ahaziah,[2] on their way to see the two kings at Jezreel, and to salute their cousins, the children of Jehoram, and their kinsfolk the children of Jezebel the Gebîrah.[3] The answer sealed their fate. Jehu ordered his followers to take them alive. At first he had not decided what he would do with them. But half measures had now become impossible. This cavalcade of princes little knew that they were on their way to greet the dead children of a dead king and a dead queen. Jehu felt that the possibilities of an endless *vendetta* must be quenched in blood. He gave orders to slay them, and there in one hour forty-two more scions of the royal houses of Judah and Israel were done to death.[4] With the usual reckless insouciance of the East, where any tank or well is made the natural receptacle for corpses regardless of ultimate consequences, their bodies were flung into the cistern of the shearing-house, in which the sheep were washed before shearing, just as the bodies of Gedaliah's followers were flung by Ishmael into the well at Mizpah, and the bodies of our own murdered countrymen were

[1] 2 Kings x. 12. The shepherds' House of Meeting (*Beth-equed-haroim*). LXX., *ἐν Βαιθακάθ*; Vulg., *ad cameram pastorum*; Aquila, *οἴκος κάμψεως*. It has been conjectured by Klostermann that it belonged to the Rechabites, that they had been persecuted by Jezebel, and that they were glad to help in taking vengeance on her descendants.

[2] The Chronicler (2 Chron. xxii. 8) says "*sons* of the brethren of Ahaziah."

[3] LXX., *ἡ δυναστεύουσα*.

[4] 2 Kings x. 14, A.V., "at the pit." Lit., "in" or "into the cistern."

flung into the well of Cawnpore. He did not leave one of them alive.

Thus Jehu "murdered two kings, and one hundred and twelve princes, and gave Queen Jezebel to dogs to eat; and if priests had but noticed how even Hosea condemns and denounces his savagery, they would have abstained from some of their glorifications of assassins and butchers, nor would they have appealed to this man's hideous example, as they have done, to excuse some of their own revolting atrocities."[1] But

> "Crime was ne'er so black
> As ghostly cheer and pious thanks to lack.
> Satan is modest. At heaven's door he lays
> His evil offspring, and in Scriptural phrase
> And saintly posture gives to God the praise
> And honour of his monstrous progeny."[2]

One cruel deed more or less was nothing to Jehu. Leaving this tank choked with death and incarnadined with royal blood, he went on his way as if nothing particular had happened. He had not proceeded far when he saw a man well known to him, and of a spirit kindred to his own. It was the Arab ascetic and Nazarite Jehonadab, the son of Rechab (or "The Rider"), the chief of the tribe of Kenites who had flung in their lot with the children of Israel since the days of Moses.[3] It was the tribe which had produced a Jael; and Jehonadab had something of the fierce, fanatical

[1] See Martin, *Hist. de France*, ix. 114.

[2] Whittier.

[3] Jer. xxxv. 1–19. Josephus (*Antt.*, IX. vi. 6) calls him "a good man and a just, who had long been a friend of Jehu." "He was," says Ewald (*Gesch.*, iii. 543), "of a society of those who despaired of being able to observe true religion undisturbedly in the midst of the nation with the stringency with which they understood it, and therefore withdrew into the desert."

spirit of the ancient chieftainess, who, in her own tent, had dashed out with the tent-peg the brains of Sisera. His very name, "The Lord is noble," indicated that he was a worshipper of Jehovah, and his fierce zeal showed him to be a genuine Kenite. Disgusted with the wickedness of cities, disgusted above all with the loathly vice of drunkenness, which, as we see from the contemporary prophets, had begun in this age to acquire fresh prominence in luxurious and wealthy communities, he exacted of his sons a solemn oath that neither they nor their successors would drink wine nor strong drink, and that, shunning the squalor and corruption of cities, they would live in tents, as their nomad ancestors had done in the days when Jethro and Hobab were princes of pastoral Midian. We learn from Jeremiah, nearly two and a half centuries later, how faithfully that oath had been observed; and how, in spite of all temptation, the vow of abstinence was maintained, even when the strain of foreign invasion had driven the Rechabites into Jerusalem from their desolated pastures.[1]

Jehu knew that the stern fanaticism of the Kenite Emîr would rejoice in his exterminating zeal, and he recognised that the friendship and countenance of this "good man and just," as Josephus calls him, would add strength to his cause, and enable him to carry out his dark design. He therefore blessed him.[2]

"Is thine heart right with my heart, as my heart is with thy heart?" he asked, after he had returned the greeting of Jehonadab.

[1] Jer. xxxv. (written about B.C. 604). Communities of Nazarites seem to have sprung up at this epoch, perhaps as a protest against the prevailing luxury (Amos ii. 11).

[2] In Josephus it is Jehonadab who blesses the king.

"It is, it is!" answered the vehement Rechabite.[1]

"Then give me thy hand," he said; and grasping the Arab by the hand,[2] he pulled him up into his chariot—the highest distinction he could bestow upon him—and bade him come and witness his zeal for Jehovah.

His first task on arriving at Samaria was to tear up the last fibres of Ahab's kith and destroy all his partisans. This was indeed to push to a self-interested extreme the denunciation which had been pronounced upon Ahab; but the crime helped to secure his fiercely founded throne.

One deep-seated plot was yet unaccomplished. It was the total extermination of Baal-worship. To drive out for ever this orgiastic, corrupt, and alien idolatry was right; but there is nothing to show that Jehu would have been unable to effect this purpose by one stern decree, together with the destruction of Baal's images and temple. A method so simply righteous did not suit this Nero-Torquemada, who seemed to be never happy unless he united Jesuitical cunning with the pouring out of rivers of massacre.

He summoned the people together; and as though he now threw off all pretence of zeal for orthodoxy, he proclaimed that Ahab had served Baal a little, but Jehu would serve him much. The Samaritans must have been endowed with infinite gullibility if they could suppose that the king who had ridden into the city side by side with such a man as Jehonadab—"the warrior in his coat of mail, the ascetic in his shirt of hair"—who had already exhibited an unfathomable

[1] Heb., יֵשׁ וְיֵשׁ.

[2] Striking hands was a sign of good faith (Job xvii. 3; Prov. xxii. 26).

cunning, and had swept away the Baal-priests of Jezreel, was indeed sincere in this new conversion.[1] Perhaps they felt it dangerous to question the sincerity of kings. The Baal-worshippers of former days were known, and Jehu proclaimed that if any one of them was missing at the great sacrifice which he intended to offer to Baal he should be put to death. A solemn assembly to Baal was proclaimed, and every apostate from God to nature-worship from all Israel was present, till the idol's temple was thronged from end to end.[2] To add splendour to the solemnity, Jehu bade the wardrobe-keeper to bring out all the rich vestments of Tyrian dye and Sidonian broidery, and clothe the worshippers.[3] Solemnly advancing to the altar with the Rechabite by his side, he warned the assembly to see that their gathering was not polluted by the presence of a single known worshipper of Jehovah. Then, apparently, he still further disarmed suspicion by taking a personal part in offering the burnt-offering. Meanwhile, he had surrounded the temple and blocked every exit with eighty armed warriors, and had threatened that any

[1] He did it "in subtilty" (בְּעָקְבָה). This substantive occurs nowhere else, but is connected with the name Jacob. LXX., *ἐν πτερνισμῷ*, "in taking by the heel," with reference to the name Jacob, "supplanter."

[2] Lit., "mouth to mouth." LXX., *στόμα ἐς στόμα.*

[3] Ver. 22, מַלְתָּחָה, *Vestiarum*, occurs here only. The LXX. omits it or puts it in Greek letters. Targum, *κάμπραι*, "chests" Sil. Italicus (iii. 23) describes the robes of the priests of the Gaditanian Hercules,—

> *"Nec discolor ulli,*
> *Ante aras cultus; velantur corpora lino*
> *Et Pelusiaco præfulget stamine vertex."*
>
> KEIL, *ad loc.*

It was a mixture of "the rich dye of Tyre and the rich web of Nile."

one of them should be put to death if he let a single Baal-worshipper escape. When he had finished the offering,[1] he went forth, and bade his soldiers enter, and slay, and slay, and slay till none were left. Then flinging the corpses in a heap, they made their way to the fortress of the Temple, where some of the priests may have taken refuge. They dragged out and burnt the *matstseboth* of Baal,[2] broke down the great central idol, and utterly dismantled the whole building. To complete the pollution of the dishallowed shrine, he made it a common midden for Samaria, which it continued to be for centuries afterwards.[3] It was his last voluntary massacre. The House of Ahab was no more. Baal-worship in Israel never survived that exterminating blow.

Happily for the human race, such atrocities committed in the name of religion have not been common. In Pagan history we have but few instances, except the slaughter of the Magians at the beginning of the reign of Darius, son of Hystaspes. Alas that other parallels should be furnished by the abominable tyranny of a false Christianity, blessed and incited by popes and priests! The persecutions and massacres of the Albigenses, preached by Arnold of Citeaux, and instigated by Pope Innocent III.; the expulsion of the Jews from Spain; the deadly work of Torquemada; the murderous furies of Alva among the hapless Netherlanders, urged and approved by Pope Pius V.; the massacre of St.

[1] The phrase may be impersonal, "when one [*i.e.*, they] had finished the sacrifice"; but the narrative seems to imply that Jehu offered it himself (LXX., ὡς συνετέλεσαν ποιοῦντες τὴν ὁλοκαύτωσιν· Vulg., *cum completum esset holocaustum*).

[2] A.V., images; R.V., pillars.

[3] Comp. Ezra vi. 11; Dan. ii. 5.

Bartholomew, for which Pope Gregory and his cardinals sang their horrible Te Deum in their desecrated shrines, —these are the parallels to the deeds of Jehu. He has found his chief imitators among the votaries of a blood-stained and usurping sacerdotalism, which has committed so many crimes and inflicted so many horrors on mankind.

And did God approve all this detestable mixture of zealous enthusiasm with lying deceit and the insatiate thirst of blood?

If right be right, and wrong be wrong, the answer must not be an elaborate subterfuge, but an uncompromising "No!" We need be under no doubt on that subject. Christ Himself reproved His Apostles for savage zealotry, and taught them that the Elijah-spirit was not the Christ-spirit. Nor is the Elisha-spirit the Christian spirit any the more if these deeds of hypocrisy and blood were in any sense approved by him who is sometimes regarded as the mild and gentle Elisha. Where was he? Why was he silent? Could he possibly approve of this murderer's fury? We do not, indeed, know how far Elisha lent his sanction to anything more than the general end. Ahab's house had been doomed to vengeance by the voice which gave utterance to the verdict of the national conscience. The doom was just; Jehu was ordained to be the executioner. In no other way could the judgment be carried out. The times were not sentimental. The murder of Jehoram was not regarded as an act of tyrannicide, but of divinely commissioned justice. Elisha *may* have shrunk from the unreined furies of the man whom he had sent his emissary to anoint. On the other hand, we have not the least proof that he did so. He partook, probably, of the wild spirit of

the times, when such deeds were regarded with feelings very different from the abhorrence with which we, better taught by the spirit of love, and more enlightened by the widening dawn of history, now justly regard them. No remonstrance of *contemporary* prophecy, however faint, is recorded as having been uttered against the doings of Jehu. The fact that, several centuries later, they could be recorded by the historian without a syllable of reprobation shows that the education of nations in the lessons of righteousness is slow, and that we are still amid the annals of the deep night of moral imperfection. But the nation was on the eve of purer teaching, and in the prophets Amos and Hosea we read the clear condemnation of deeds of cruelty in general, and specially of the king who felt no pity. Amos condemns even the idolatrous King of Edom, "because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever."[1] He condemns no less severely the Chemosh-worshipping King of Moab even for an insult done to the dead: "Because he burned the bones of the King of Edom into lime."[2] Jehu had warred pitilessly upon the living, and had shamelessly insulted the dead. He had flung the heads of seventy princes in two bleeding heaps on the common road for all eyes to stare upon, and he had polluted the cistern of Beth-equed-haroim with the dead bodies of forty-two youths of the royal house of Judah. He might plead that he was but carrying out to the full the commission of Jehovah, imposed upon him by Elisha; but Hosea, a century later, gives God's message against his house: "Yet a little while, and I will avenge

[1] Amos i. 11. [2] Amos ii. 1.

the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."[1]

Nay, more! If, as is possible, the ghastly story of the siege of Samaria, narrated in the memoirs of Elisha, is displaced, and if it really belongs to the reign of Jehoahaz ben-Jehu, then Elisha himself brands the cruelty of the rushing thunderbolt of vengeance which his own hand had launched. For he calls the unnamed "King of Israel" "the son of a murderer."

Men who are swords of God, and human executioners of Divine justice, may easily deceive themselves. God works the ends of His own providence, and He uses their ministry. "The fierceness of man shall turn to Thy praise, and the fierceness of them shalt Thou refrain."[2] But they can never make their plea of prophetic sanction a cloak of maliciousness. Cromwell had stern work to do. Rightly or wrongly, he deemed it inevitable, and did not shrink from it. But he hated it. Over and over again, he tells us, he had prayed to God that He would not put him to this work. To the best of his power he avoided, he minimised, every act of vengeance, even when the sternness of his Puritan sense of righteousness made him look on it as duty. Far different was the case of Jehu. He loved murder and cunning for their own sakes, and, like Joab, he dyed the garments of peace with the blood of war.

How little was his gain! It had been happier for him if he had never mounted higher than the captaincy of the host, or even so high. He reigned for twenty-eight years (842–814)—longer than any king except his great-grandson Jeroboam II.; and in recognition of any element of righteousness which had actuated his revolt,

[1] Hos. i. 4. [2] Psalm lxxvi. 10.

his children, even to the fourth generation, were suffered to sit upon the throne. His dynasty lasted for one hundred and thirteen years.[1] But his own reign was only memorable for defeat, trouble, and irreparable disaster.

For Hazael, who had seized the throne of his murdered lord Benhadad, was a fierce and able warrior. He held his own against the overweening might of his northern neighbour Assyria; and whenever he obtained a respite from this desperate warfare, he indemnified himself for all losses by enlarging his dominion out of the territories of the Ten Tribes. "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short, and Hazael smote them in all the borders of Israel." Jehu had the mortification of seeing the fairest and most fruitful regions of his dominion, those which had belonged to Israel from the most ancient times, wrenched out of his grasp. From this time forwards Israel lost half the fair Promised Land which God had given to their fathers. It was the beginning of the end. Henceforth the tribal inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh was an oppressed dependency of Aram. Hazael overran and annexed the land of Bashan from the spurs of Mount Hermon to the Lake of Gennezareth; Gaulan, and volcanic Argob, and Hauran the entire ancient kingdom of Og, King of Bashan, with all the herds and pasture-lands. Southward of this he seized the whole forest-clad plateau of Gilead, with its lovely ravines, north of the Jabbok, the territory of Gad; and pushing

[1] Jehu . . . . 842—814.
Jehoahaz . . . . . 814—797.
Joash . . . . . 797—781.
Jeroboam II. . . . . 781—740.
Zechariah . . . . 740.

still southward, established his sway over the district, of the Ammonites and the tribe of Reuben, as far as the city of Aroer, on the other side of the great chasm of Arnon (Wady Mojib). All the fatness of Bashan and Rabbah with her watery plain of the Beni-Ammon, and the grass-covered uplands which fed the enormous flocks of Mesha, the great Emîr and sheep-master of Moab, passed from Israel to Syria, never to be recovered. What made the humiliation more terrible was that the invasion and conquest were accompanied with acts of unwonted cruelty. Elisha had wept to think what evil Hazael would do the children of Israel[1]—how he would set their strongholds on fire, and slay their young men with the sword, and dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their women with child. These atrocities were in those horrible days the ordinary incidents of warfare;[2] but Hazael seems to have been pre-eminent in brutal fierceness. It was this which called down on him and his people the "burdens" of Amos. "Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad."[3]

We can imagine rather than describe the anguish of Jehu when he was compelled to look impotently on, while his powerful Syrian neighbour laid waste his dominion with fire and sword, and the cry of his despoiled and slaughtered subjects was uplifted to him in vain. Nor was this all. Emboldened by these re-

[1] 2 Kings viii. 12.

[2] Isa. xiii. 11–16; Hos. x. 14, xiii. 16; Nah. iii. 10.

[3] Amos i. 3, 4.

verses, a host of other enemies, once subjugated and despised, began to wreak their revenge and insolence on humbled Israel. The Philistines eagerly undertook the sale of the wretched captives who were brought to them in gangs from the burnt Trans-Jordanic towns.[1] The old "brotherly covenant" with the Tyrian, which had once been formed by Solomon, and had been cemented by the marriage of Jezebel with Ahab, was cancelled by Jehu's insults, and the Tyrians emulously outbad the Philistines in the purchase of Israelitish slaves. The Edomites and the Ammonites also helped Hazael in his marauding raids, and enlarged their own domains at the expense of Samaria. Such insults and humiliations might well go far to break the heart of an impetuous and warrior-king.

Of Jehu the Books of Kings and Chronicles have no more to tell us, but we gain fresh insight into his degradation from the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser II. (860–824), now in the British Museum. From the inscription we find that, in 842, Jehu—"the son of Omri," as he is erroneously called—was one of the vassal kings who subjected themselves to the Assyrian conqueror,[2] and sent him tribute, which may have euphemistically passed under the name of presents.

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[1] Amos i. 6–15.

[2] See Appendix I., Schrader, *Keilinschriften u. das Alte Test.*, 208 ff.; Sayce, *Records of the Past*, v. 41; Layard, *Nineveh*, p. 613; Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, i. 469. He is twice mentioned in inscriptions of Shalmaneser II. (861–825). He is called Ja-hu-a, son of Omri. The name of Omri was familiar in Nineveh; for Ahab had fought as a vassal of Assyria at the battle of Karkar, and Samaria was called Beth-Khumri. Shalmaneser would not trouble himself with the fact that Jehu had extirpated the old dynasty. His black stèlè was found by Layard, and is figured in *Monuments of Nineveh*, i., pl. 53. The name of Jehu was first deciphered by Dr. Hincks in 1851.

The despot of Nineveh twice speaks of it as a tribute. On this obelisk we see a picture of Jehu's ambassadors —perhaps of Jehu himself. On the left stands the Assyrian King with the winged circle over his head. He holds a beaker of wine in his hand, and two eunuchs stand behind him, one of whom covers him with a sunshade. Before him kneels and grovels in adoration the Jewish King, with his beard sweeping the ground. In long array behind him come his servants—first two eunuchs, then a number of bearded figures, who carry the tribute. They are dressed in long richly fringed robes, exactly resembling those of the Assyrians themselves, and they wear shoes which turn up at the toes. They are carrying figures of gold and silver, goblets, golden vessels, ingots of precious metals, spear-shafts, a kingly sceptre, baskets, bags, and trays of treasure, the contribution of which must have fallen with crushing weight on the impoverished kingdom.[1]

This tribute must have been sent in 842, the eighteenth year of Shalmaneser II.'s reign. Doubtless Jehu thought he might be delivered from his furious neighbour Hazael by propitiating the Northern tyrant, who at the same time received the submission of the Tyrians and Sidonians. But if so, Jehu's hopes were dashed to the ground. Shalmaneser was the enemy of Hazael (Ha-sa-ilu), who had gone out to meet him at Antilibanus, and there had fought a desperate battle. The Syrian King was routed, and driven back, and Shalmaneser had besieged Damascus. But he had failed to take it, and indeed had not troubled Syria again till 832, when he made an excursion of minor importance. His troubles on the north and east of

[1] Schrader (E. T.), ii. 199.

Assyria had diverted his attention from Damascus; and this, together with the inferiority of his son Samsiniras (*d.* 811), had given Hazael a free hand to avenge himself on Israel as the ally of Assyria. Of Jehu we hear no more. After his long reign of twenty-eight years he slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria, and Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. Savage as had been his measures, his victory over alien idolatries was by no means complete. What Micah calls "the statutes of Omri, and the works of the House of Ahab,"[1] were still kept; and men, both in Israel and Judah, walked in their old sins. Even in the reign of Jehu's own son Jehoahaz there still remained in Samaria the Asherah, or tree consecrated to the nature-goddess, which Jehu seems to have put away, but not to have destroyed.[2] As he grovelled in the dust before Shalmaneser, did no memory of his own ferocities darken his humiliated soul? Must not he, like our Henry II., have been inclined to utter the wailing cry, "Shame, shame on a conquered king!"

[1] Mic. vi. 16. [2] 2 Kings xiii. 6.

CHAPTER XIV

ATHALIAH (B.C. 842—836)—*JOASH BEN-AHAZIAH OF JUDAH* (B.C. 836—796)

2 KINGS xi. 1—xii. 21

"Par cette fin terrible, et due à ses forfaits,
Apprenez, Roi des Juifs, et n'oubliez jamais,
Que les rois dans le ciel ont un juge sevère,
L'innocence un vengeur, et les orphelins un père!"

RACINE, *Athalie*.

"Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That, hushed in grim repose, expects its evening prey."

GRAY.

BEFORE we follow the destinies of the House of Jehu we must revert to Judah, and watch the final consequences of ruin which came in the train of Ahab's Tyrian marriage, and brought murder and idolatry into Judah, as well as into Israel.

Athaliah, who, as queen-mother, was more powerful than the queen-consort (*malekkah*), was the true daughter of Jezebel. She exhibits the same undaunted fierceness, the same idolatrous fanaticism, the same swift resolution, the same cruel and unscrupulous wickedness.

It might have been supposed that the miserable disease of her husband Jehoram, followed so speedily by the murder, after one year's reign, of her son Ahaziah, might have exercised over her character the

softening influence of misfortune. On the contrary, she only saw in these events a short path to the consummation of her ambition.

Under Jehoram she had been queen: under Ahaziah she had exercised still more powerful influence as Gebîrah, and had asserted her sway alike over her husband and over her son, whose counsellor she was to do wickedly. It was far from her intention tamely to sink from her commanding position into the abject nullity of an aged and despised dowager in a dull provincial seraglio. She even thought that

> "To reign is worth ambition, though in hell;
> Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

The royal family of the House of David, numerous and flourishing as it once was, had recently been decimated by cruel catastrophes. Jehoram, instigated probably by his heathen wife, had killed his six younger brothers.[1] Later on, the Arabs and Philistines, in their insulting invasion, had not only plundered his palace, but had carried away his sons; so that, according to the Chronicler, "there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz [*i.e.*, Ahaziah], the youngest of his sons."[2] He may have had other sons after that invasion; and Ahaziah had left children, who must all, however, have been very young, since he was only twenty-two or twenty-three when Jehu's servants murdered him. Athaliah might naturally have hoped for the regency; but this did not content her. When she saw that her son Ahaziah was dead, "she arose and destroyed all the seed royal." In those days the life of a child was but little thought of; and it weighed less than nothing with Athaliah that these innocents were her grandchildren.

[1] 2 Chron. xxi. 2-4. [2] 2 Chron. xxi. 17.

She killed all of whose existence she was aware, and boldly seized the crown. No queen had ever reigned alone either in Israel or in Judah. Judah must have sunk very low, and the talents of Athaliah must have been commanding, or she could never have established a precedent hitherto undreamed of, by imposing on the people of David for six years the yoke of a woman, and that woman a half-Phœnician idolatress. Yet so it was! Athaliah, like her cousin Dido, felt herself strong enough to rule.

But a woman's ruthlessness was outwitted by a woman's cunning. Ahaziah had a half-sister on the father's side,[1] the princess Jehosheba, or Jehoshabeath, who was then or afterwards (we are told) married to Jehoiada, the high priest.[2] The secrets of harems are hidden deep, and Athaliah may have been purposely kept in ignorance of the birth to Ahaziah of a little babe whose mother was Zibiah of Beersheba, and who had received the name of Joash. If she knew of his existence, some ruse must have been palmed off upon her, and she must have been led to believe that he too had been killed. But he had not been killed. Jehosheba "stole him from among the king's sons that were slain," and, with the connivance of his nurse, hid him from the murderers sent by Athaliah in the palace store-room in which beds and couches were kept.[3] Thence, at the first favourable moment, she transferred the child and nurse to one of the chambers in the three storeys of

[1] ὁμοπάτριος ἀδελφή (Jos.).

[2] 2 Chron. xxii. 11. There are undoubted difficulties about the statement (see *infra*). There is no other instance of the marriage of a princess with a priest.

[3] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. vii. 1 : τὸ ταμεῖον τῶν κλινῶν. The chamber of beds was a sort of unoccupied wardrobe-room.

chambers which ran round the Temple, and were variously used as wardrobes or as dwelling-rooms.

The hiding-place was safe; for under Athaliah the Temple of Jehovah fell into neglect and disrepute, and its resident ministers would not be numerous. It would not have been difficult, in the seclusion of Eastern life, for Jehosheba to pass off the babe as her own child to all but the handful who knew the secret.

Six years passed away, and the iron hand of Athaliah still kept the people in subjection. She had boldly set up in Judah her mother's Baal-worship. Baal had his temple not far from that of Jehovah; and though Athaliah did not imitate Jezebel in persecuting the worshippers of Jehovah, she made her own high priest, Mattan, a much more important person than Jehoiada for all who desired to propitiate the favours of the Court.

Joash had now reached his seventh year, and a Jewish prince in his seventh year is regarded as something more than a mere child. Jehoiada thought that it was time to strike a blow in his favour, and to deliver him from the dreadful confinement which made it impossible for him to leave the Temple precincts.

He began secretly to tamper with the guards both of the Temple and of the palace. Upon the Levitic guards, indignant at the intrusion of Baal-worship, he might securely count, and the Carites and queen's runners were not likely to be very much devoted to the rule of the manlike and idolatrous alien-queen. Taking an oath of them in secrecy, he bound them to allegiance to the little boy whom he produced from the Temple chamber as their lawful lord, and the son of their late king.

The plot was well laid. There were five captains of the five hundred royal body-guards, and the priest

secretly enlisted them all in the service.[1] The Chronicler says that he also sent round to all the chief Levites, and collected them in Jerusalem for the emergency. The arrangements of the Sabbath gave special facility to his plans; for on that day only one of the five divisions of guards mounted watch at the palace, and the others were set free for the service of the Temple.[2] It had evidently been announced that some great ceremony would be held in the shrine of Jehovah; for all the people, we are told, were assembled in the courts of the house of the Lord. Jehoiada ordered one of the companies to guard the palace; another to be at the "gate Sur," or the gate "of the Foundation";[3] another at the gate behind the barracks (?) of the palace-runners, to be a barrier[4] against any incursion from the palace. Two more were to ensure the safety of the little king by watching the precincts of the Temple. The Levitic officers were to protect the king's person with serried ranks. Jehoiada armed them with spears and shields, which David had placed as trophies in the porch; and if any one tried to force his way within their lines he was to be slain. The only danger to be apprehended was from any Carite mercenaries, or palace-servants of the queen: among all others Jehoiada found a wide-spread defection. The people, the Levites, even the soldiers, all hated the Baal-worshipping usurper.[5]

At the fateful moment the guards were arranged in

[1] 2 Kings xi. 4: "The centurions of the Carians and of the runners."

[2] This is the second time that the word "Sabbath" occurs, or that the institution is alluded to, in the history of either monarchy.

[3] Nothing is known of סוּר, Sur, or יְסוֹד *y'sôd*, the Foundation (2 Chron. xxiii. 5). They are not mentioned elsewhere. LXX., *ἐν τῇ πύλῃ τῶν ὀδῶν*, and (in Chronicles) *ἐν τῇ πύλῃ τῇ μέσῃ*.

[4] Not as in A.V., "that it be not broken down."

[5] In reading side by side the narratives in the Books of Kings and

two dense lines, beginning from either side of the porch, till their ranks met beyond the altar, so as to form a hedge round the royal boy. Into this triangular space the young prince was led by the high priest, and placed beside the *Matstsebah*—some prominent pillar in the Temple court, either one of Solomon's pillars Jachin and Boaz, or some special erection of later days.[1] Round him stood the princes of Judah, and there, in the midst of them, Jehoiada placed the crown upon his head, and in significant symbol also laid lightly upon it for a moment "The Testimony"—perhaps the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant—the most ancient fragment of the Pentateuch[2]—which was treasured up with the pot of manna inside or in front of the Ark. Then he poured on the child's head the consecrated oil, and said, "Let the king live!"

The completion of the ceremony was marked by the blare of the rams' horns, the softer blast of the silver trumpets, and the answering shouts of the soldiers and the people. The tumult, or the news of it, reached

Chronicles (2 Chron. xxiii.), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the main anxiety of the Chronicler is to leave the impression that the work in the Temple was chiefly done by the Levites, and that the sacred precincts were not polluted by the presence of alien troops. He evidently stumbled at the notion, conveyed by the older narrative, that Carians and suchlike semi-heathen mercenaries should have stood by the altar at a high priest's command; so he substitutes Levites for guardsmen, and the profane laymen are relegated outside. In details the two accounts are only reconcilable by a special pleading which would reconcile *any* discrepancy.

[1] 1 Kings vii. 21. Comp., however, 2 Kings xxiii. 3.

[2] See Exod. xxv. 16, 21, xvi. 34. עֵדוּת (see 2 Chron. xxiii. 11). Kimchi takes it to mean "a royal robe," and other Rabbis a phylactery on the coronet (Deut. vi. 8). In the Targum to Chronicles it is explained to mean the costly jewel (2 Sam. xii. 30), of which none but a descendant of David could bear the weight. For *ha'edóth* Klostermann therefore suggests *hats'adóth*, "the royal bracelets."

the ears of Athaliah in the neighbouring palace, and, with all the undaunted courage of her mother, she instantly summoned her escort, and went into the Temple to see for herself what was taking place.[1] She probably mounted the ascent which Solomon had made from the palace to the Temple court, though it had long been robbed of its precious metals and scented woods. She led the way, and thought to overawe by her personal ascendency any irregularity which might be going on; for in the deathful hush to which she had reduced her subjects she does not seem to have dreamt of rebellion. No sooner had she entered than the guards closed behind her, excluding and menacing her escort.[2]

A glance was sufficient to reveal to her the significance of the whole scene. There, in royal robes, and crowned with the royal crown, stood her little unknown grandson beside the *Matstsebah*,[3] while round him were the leaders of the people and the trumpeters, and the multitudes were still rolling their tumult of acclamation from the court below. In that sight she read her doom. Rending her clothes, she turned to fly, shrieking, "Treason! treason!" Then the commands of the priest rang out: "Keep her between the ranks,[4] till you have got her outside the area of the Temple; and if any of her guards follow or try to rescue her, kill him with the sword. But let not the sacred courts be polluted with her blood." So they made way for

[1] So says Josephus (*μετὰ τῆς ἰδίας στρατιᾶς*), and it is certain that she would hardly go unattended.

[2] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. vii. 3: *Τοὺς δὲ ἐπομένους ὁπλίτας εἶρξαν εἰσελθεῖν.*

[3] The meaning of *al-ha'amôd* is uncertain (A.V., "by a pillar"; Vulg., "on the tribunal"). Comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxiii. 13; 1 Kings viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 13.

[4] 2 Kings xi. 15. Not as in A.V., "without the ranges." Heb., *lâsh'dêrôth*; LXX., *ἔσωθεν τῶν σαδηρώθ.*

her,[1] and as she could not escape she passed between the rows of Levites and soldiers till she had reached the private chariot-road by which the kings drove to the precincts.[2] There the sword of vengeance fell. Athaliah disappears from history, and with her the dark race of Jezebel. But her story lives in the music of Handel and the verse of Racine.

This is the only recorded revolution in the history of Judah. In two later cases a king of Judah was murdered, but in both instances "the people of the land" restored the Davidic heir. Life in Judah was less dramatic and exciting than in Israel, but far more stable;[3] and this, together with comparative immunity from foreign invasions, constituted an immense advantage.

Jehoiada, of course, became regent for the young king, and continued to be his guide for many years, so that even the king's two wives were selected by his advice. As the nation had been distracted with idolatries, he made the covenant between the king and the people that they should be loyal to each other,

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[1] A.V., "And they laid hands on her"; LXX., *ἐπέβαλον αὐτῇ χεῖρας*; Vulg., *imposuerunt ei manus*. But R.V. as in the text, following the Targum, and the Jewish commentators, "They made for her two sides."

[2] This is usually understood to be the "horse gate" of the city (Neh. iii. 28), and so Josephus seems to have taken it, for he says that Athaliah was killed in "the Kedron Valley." Canon Rawlinson says that it was more probably in the Tyropœon Valley. But there could have been no object in dragging the wretched queen all this way. Jehoiada was only anxious that she should not stain the Temple with her blood, and "the way by which the horses came into the king's house" seems to be some private palace-gate. We are expressly told (ver. 16) that Athaliah was slain "at the king's house," probably in "the king's garden" (2 Kings xxv. 4).

[3] Wellhausen, *Isr. and Jud.*, p. 96.

and between Jehoiada and the king and the people that they should be Jehovah's people. Such covenants were not infrequent in Jewish history. Such a covenant had been made by Asa[1] after Abijam's apostasy, as it was afterwards made by Hezekiah[2] and by Josiah.[3] The new covenant, and the sense of awakenment from the dream of guilty apostasy, evoked an outburst of spontaneous enthusiasm in the hearts of the populace. Of their own impulse they rushed to the temple of Baal which Athaliah had reared, dismantled it, and smashed to pieces his altars and images. The riot was only stained by a single murder. They slew Mattan, Athaliah's Baal-priest, before the altars of his god.[4]

With Jehoiada begins the title of "high priest." Hitherto no higher name than "the priest" had been given even to Aaron, or Eli, or Zadok; but thenceforth the title of "chief priest" is given to his successors, among whom he inaugurated a new epoch.[5]

It was now Jehoiada's object to restore such splendour and solemnity as he could to the neglected worship of the Temple, which had suffered in every way from Baal's encroachments. He did this before the king's second solemn inauguration. Even the porters had been done away with, so that the Temple could at any time be polluted by the presence of the unclean, and

[1] 2 Chron. xv. 9–15.

[2] 2 Chron. xxix. 10.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31.

[4] The name is perhaps an abbreviation from Mattan-Baal, "gift of Baal." Comp. "Methumballes" (Plaut.). The names of Tyrian kings, Mitinna, Mattun, occur in inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser II. See Herod., vii. 98 (Bahr, *ad loc.*). "Methumbaal of Arvad" is mentioned on a monument of Tiglath-Pileser II. (Schrader, ii. 249).

[5] 2 Kings xii. 10; Jer. xxix. 26; 2 Chron. xxiv. 6. Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 399.

the whole service of priests and Levites had fallen into desuetude.

Then he took the captains, and the Carians, and the princes, and conducted the boy-king, amid throngs of his shouting and rejoicing people, from the Temple to his own palace. There he seated him on the lion-throne of Solomon his father, in the great hall of justice, and the city was quiet and the land had rest. According to the historian, "Joash did right *all his days*, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him."[1] The stock addition that "howbeit the *bamoth* were not removed, and the people still sacrificed and offered incense there," is no derogation from the merits of Joash, and perhaps not even of Jehoiada, since if the law against the *bamoth* then existed, it had become absolutely unknown, and these local sanctuaries were held to be conducive to true religion.[2]

It was natural that the child of the Temple should have at heart the interests of the Temple in which he had spent his early days, and to the shelter of which he owed his life and throne. The sacred house had been insulted and plundered by persons whom the Chronicler calls "the sons of Athaliah, that wicked

[1] 2 Kings xii. 2. After "all his days," the R.V. and A.V. add "*wherein* Jehoiada instructed him." This, however, is not accurate. There is a stop at days, and "wherein" should be "*because*." There seems, however, from the LXX., to be some variation in the text, and according to the Chronicler Joash became an apostate. LXX., Πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἃς ἐφώτιζεν αὐτὸν ὁ ἱερεύς; Vulg., *Cunctis diebus quibus docuit eum Jojadas sacerdos.*

[2] The Chronicler (2 Chron. xxiv. 1, 2) *more suo* copies 2 Kings xii. 1, 2, but omits 3, because he dislikes the fact that not even his hero Jehoiada had anything to say against the *bamoth*. But it appears from 2 Kings xxiii. 9 that the *bamoth* had regular priests of their own, who "eat the priestly portions" (according to an old MS.) among their brethren.

woman,"[1] meaning, probably, her adherents. Not only had its treasures been robbed to enrich the house of Baal, but it had been suffered to fall into complete disrepair. Breaches gaped in the outer walls, and the very foundations were insecure. The necessity for restoring it occurred, not, as we should have expected, to the priests who lived at its altar, but to the boy-king. He issued an order to the priests that they should take charge of all the money presented to the Temple for the hallowed things, all the money paid in current coin, and all the assessments for various fines and vows,[2] together with every freewill contribution. They were to have this revenue entirely at their disposal, and to make themselves responsible for the necessary repairs. According to the Chronicler, they were further to raise a subscription throughout the country from all their personal friends.

The king's command had been urgent. Money had at first come in, but nothing was done. Joash had reached the twenty-third year of his reign, and was thirty years old; but the Temple remained in its old sordid condition. The matter is passed over by the king as lightly, courteously, and considerately as he could; but if he does not charge the priests with downright embezzlement, he does reproach them for most reprehensible neglect. They were the appointed guardians of the house: why did they suffer its dilapidations to remain untouched year after year, while they continued to receive the golden stream which poured—but now, owing to the disgust of the people,

[1] 2 Chron. xxiv. 7.

[2] 2 Kings xii. 4: "The money that every man is set at." Lit., "Each the money of the souls of his valuation." Comp. Numb. xviii. 16; Lev. xxvii. 2.

in diminished volume—into their coffers? "Take no more money, therefore," he said, "from your acquaintances, but deliver it for the breaches of the house." For what they had already received he does not call them to account, but henceforth takes the whole matter into his own hands. The neglectful priests were to receive no more contributions, and not to be responsible for the repairs. Joash, however, ordered Jehoiada to take a chest and put it beside the altar on the right.[1] All contributions were to be dropped into this chest. When it was full, it was carried by the Levites unopened into the palace,[2] and there the king's chancellor and the high priest had the ingots weighed and the money counted; its value was added up, and it was handed over immediately to the architects, who paid it to the carpenters and masons. The priests were left in possession of the money for the guilt-offerings[3] and for the sin-offerings, but with the rest of the funds they had nothing to do. In this way was restored the confidence which the management of the hierarchy had evidently forfeited, and with renewed confidence in the administration fresh gifts poured in. Even in the cautious narrative of the Chronicler it is clear that the priests hardly came out of these transactions with flying colours. If their honesty is not formally impugned, at least their torpor is obvious, as is the fact that they had wholly failed to inspire the zeal of the people till the young king took the affair into his own hands.[4]

[1] The Chronicler says "at the gate."

[2] 2 Chron. xxiv. 11.

[3] Lev. v. 1-6, xiv. 13. "Trespass-money" is here first mentioned.

[4] 2 Chron. xxiv. 8-10. There is a difference between the historian and the Chronicler respecting the vessels of the house.

The long reign of Joash ended in eclipse and murder. If the later tradition be correct, it was also darkened with atrocious ingratitude and crime.

For, according to the Chronicler, Jehoiada died at the advanced age of one hundred and thirty, and was buried, as an unwonted honour, in the sepulchres of the kings.[1] When he was dead, the princes of Judah came to Joash, who had now been king for many years, and with a strange suddenness tempted the zealous repairer of the Temple of Jehovah into idolatrous apostasy. With soft speech they seduced him into the worship of Asherim. It was marvellous indeed if the child of the Temple became its foe, and he who had made a covenant with Jehovah fell away to Baalim. But worse followed. Prophets reproved him, and he paid them no heed, in spite of "the greatness of the burdens"—*i.e.*, the multitude of the menaces—laid upon him.[2] The stern, denunciative harangues were despised. At last Zechariah, the son of his benefactor Jehoiada, rebuked king and people. He cried aloud from some eminence in the court of the Temple, that "since they had transgressed the commandments of Jehovah they could not prosper: they had forsaken Him, and He would forsake them." Infuriated by this prophecy of woe, the guilty people, at the command of their guiltier king,

[1] 2 Chron. xxiv. 15, 16. The statement of the Chronicler is (as so often) surrounded by difficulties and improbabilities. If Jehoiada was one hundred and thirty years old when he died, he must have been ninety when Ahaziah was murdered, at the age of twenty-three. But as Ahaziah was (apparently) born when his father Jehoram was eighteen, Jehosheba must have been under eighteen, and must have been married to a man seventy years older than herself! See Lord Arthur Hervey, *On the Genealogies*, p. 113.

[2] 2 Chron. xxiv. 27.

stoned him to death.[1] As he lay dying, he exclaimed, "The Lord look upon it, and require it!"[2]

The entire silence of the elder and better authority might lead us to hope that there may be room for doubt as to the accuracy of the much later tradition. Yet there certainly was a persistent belief that Zechariah had been thus martyred. A wild legend, related in the Talmud,[3] tells us that when Nebuzaradan conquered Jerusalem and entered the Temple he saw blood bubbling up from the floor of the court, and slaughtered ninety-four myriads, so that the blood flowed till it touched the blood of Zechariah, that it might be fulfilled which is said (Hos. iv. 2), "Blood toucheth blood." When he saw the blood of Zechariah, and noticed that it was boiling and agitated, he asked, "What is this?" and was told that it was the spilled blood of the sacrifices. Finding this to be false, he threatened to comb the flesh of the priests with iron curry-combs if they did not tell the truth. Then they confessed that it was the blood of the murdered Zechariah. "Well," he said, "I will pacify him." First he slaughtered the greater and lesser Sanhedrin: but the blood did not rest. Then he sacrificed young

[1] Stanley charitably thinks that Joash may have only burst into hasty words like those of Henry II. against Becket.

[2] The Chronicler says that "the *sons* of Jehoiada" had helped to crown him, and that he put "the *sons* of Jehoiada" to death (2 Chron. xxiii. 11, xxiv. 25).

[3] Gittin, f. 57, 2; Sanhedrin, f. 96, 2; Hershon, *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 276; Lightfoot on Matt. xxiii. 35. There can be little doubt that the reading "Berechiah" is a later correction of some one who remembered the murder narrated in Jos., *B. J.*, IV. v. 4, and that the true reading is "son of Jehoiada." This is the last murder of a prophet mentioned in the Old Testament, and we learn from the Gospel the fact that he was slain "between the Temple and the altar."

men and maidens: but the blood still bubbled. At last he cried, "Zechariah, Zechariah, must I then slay them all?" Then the blood was still, and Nebuzaradan, thinking how much blood he had shed, fled, repented, and became a Jewish proselyte!

Perhaps the worst feature of the story against Joash might have been susceptible of a less shocking colouring. He had naturally all his life been under the influence of priestly domination. The ascendency which Jehoiada had acquired as priest-regent had been maintained till long after the young king had arrived at full manhood. At last, however, he had come into collision with the priestly body. He was in the right; they were transparently in the wrong. The Chronicler, and even the older historian, soften the story against the priests as much as they can; but in both their narratives it is plain that Jehoiada and the whole hierarchy had been more careful of their own interests than of those of the Temple, of which they were the appointed guardians. Even if they can be acquitted of potential malfeasance, they had been guilty of reprehensible carelessness. It is clear that in this matter they did not command the confidence of the people; for so long as they had the management of affairs the sources of munificence were either dried up or only flowed in scanty streams, whereas they were poured forth with glad abundance when the administration of the funds was placed mainly in the hands of laymen under the king's chancellor. It is probable that when Jehoiada was dead Joash thought it right to assert his royal authority in greater independence of the priestly party; and that party was headed by Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. The Chronicler says that he prophesied: that, however, would not necessarily constitute him a

prophet, any more than it constituted Caiaphas. If he was a prophet, and was yet at the head of the priests, he furnishes an all-but solitary instance of such a position. The position of a prophet, occupied in the great work of moral reformation, was so essentially antithetic to that of priests, absorbed in ritual ceremonies, that there is no body of men in Scripture of whom, as a whole, we have a more pitiful record than of the Jewish priests. From Aaron, who made the golden calf, to Urijah, who sanctioned the idolatrous altar of Ahaz, and so down to Annas and Caiaphas, who crucified the Lord of glory, they rendered few signal services to true religion. They opposed Uzziah when he invaded their functions, but they acquiesced in all the idolatries and abominations of Rehoboam, Abijah, Ahaziah, Ahaz, and many other kings, without a syllable of recorded protest. When a prophet did spring from their ranks, they set their faces with one consent, and were confederate against him. They mocked and ridiculed Isaiah. When Jeremiah rose among them, the priest Pashur smote him on the cheek, and the whole body persecuted him to death, leaving him to be protected only by the pity of eunuchs and courtiers. Ezekiel was the priestliest of the prophets, and yet he was forced to denounce the apostasies which they permitted in the very Temple. The pages of the prophets ring with denunciations of their priestly contemporaries.[1]

We do not know enough of Zechariah to say much about his character; but priests in every age have shown themselves the most unscrupulous and the most implacable of enemies. Joash probably stood to him

[1] Isa. xxiv. 2; Jer. v. 31, xxiii. 11; Ezek. vii. 26, xxii. 26; Hos. iv. 9; Mic. iii. 11, etc.

in the same relation that Henry II. stood to Thomas à Becket. The priest's murder may have been due to an outburst of passion on the part of the king's friends, or of the king himself—gentle as his character seems to have been—without being the act of black ingratitude which late traditions represented it to be. The legend about Zechariah's blood represents the priest's spirit as so ruthlessly unforgiving as to awaken the astonishment and even the rebukes of the Babylonian idolater. Such a legend could hardly have arisen in the case of a man who was other than a most formidable opponent. The murder of Joash may have been, in its turn, a final outcome of the revenge of the priestly party. The details of the story must be left to inference and conjecture, especially as they are not even mentioned in the earlier and more impartial annalists.

It is at least singular that while Joash, the king, is blamed for continuing the worship at the *bamoth*, Jehoiada, the high priest, is *not* blamed, though they continued throughout his long and powerful regency. Further, we have an instance of the priest-regent's autocracy which can hardly be regarded as redounding to his credit. It is preserved in an accidental allusion on the page of Jeremiah. In Jer. xxix. 26 we read his reproof and doom of the lying prophecy of the priest Shemaiah the Nehelamite, because as a priest he had sent a letter to the chief priest Zephaniah and all the priests, urging them as the successors of Jehoiada to follow the ruling of Jehoiada, which was to put Jeremiah in a collar. For Jehoiada, he said, "had ordered the priests, as officers [*pakidim*] in the house of Jehovah, to put in the stocks every one that is mad and maketh himself a prophet."[1] If, then, the Jehoiada referred to is

[1] Jer. xxix. 24–32.

the priest-regent, as seems undoubtedly to be the case, we see that he hated all interference of Jehovah's prophets with his rule. That the prophets were usually regarded by the world and by priests as "mad," we see from the fact that the title is given by Jehu's captains to Elisha's emissary;[1] and that this continued to be the case we see from the fact that the priests and Pharisees of Jerusalem said of John the Baptist that he had a devil, and of Christ that He was a Samaritan, and that He, too, had a devil. If Joash was in opposition to the priestly party, he was in the same position as all God's greatest saints and reformers have ever been from the days of Moses to the days of John Wesley. The dominance of priestcraft is the invariable and inevitable death of true, as apart from functional, religion. Priests are always apt to concentrate their attention upon their temples, altars, religious practices and rites—in a word, upon the externals of religion. If they gain a complete ascendency over their fellow-believers, the faithful become their absolute slaves, religion degenerates into formalism, "and the life of the soul is choked by the observance of the ceremonial law." It was a misfortune for the Chosen People that, except among the prophets and the wise men, the external worship was thought much more of than the moral law. "To the ordinary man," says Wellhausen, "it was not moral but liturgical acts which seemed to be religious." This accounts for the monotonous iteration of judgments on the character of kings, based primarily, not upon their essential character, but on their relation to the *bamoth* and the calves.

Although the historian of the Kings gives no hint of

[1] 2 Kings ix. 11.

this dark story of Zechariah's murder, or of the apostasy of Joash, and indeed narrates no other event of the long reign of forty years, he tells us of the deplorable close. Hazael's ambition had been fatal to Israel; and now, in the cessation of Assyrian inroads upon Aram, he extended his arms towards Judah. He went up against Gath and took it, and cherished designs against Jerusalem. Apparently he did not head the expedition in person, and the historian implies that Joash bought off the attack of his "general." But the Chronicler makes things far worse. He says that the Syrian host marched to Jerusalem, destroyed all the princes of the people, plundered the city, and sent the spoil to Hazael, who was at Damascus. Judah, he says, had assembled a vast army to resist the small force of the Syrian raid; but Joash was ignominiously defeated, and was driven to pay blackmail to the invader. As to this defeat in battle the historian is silent; but he mentions what the Chronicler omits—namely, that the only way in which Joash could raise the requisite bribe was by once more stripping the Temple and the palace, and sending to Damascus all the treasures which his three predecessors had consecrated,—though we are surprised to learn that after so many strippings and plunderings any of them could still be left.

The anguish and mortification of mind caused by these disasters, and perhaps the wounds he had received in the defeat of his army, threw Joash into "great diseases." But he was not suffered to die of these.[1] His servants—perhaps, if that story be authentic, to avenge the slain son of Jehoiada, but doubtless also in

[1] But from the Book of Kings we should not infer that there had been any fighting at all. The Syrian commander had been bribed to retire.

disgust at the national humiliation—rose in conspiracy against him, and smote him at Beth-Millo,[1] where he was lying sick. The Septuagint, in 2 Chron. xxiv. 27, adds the dark fact that *all his sons* joined in the conspiracy.[2] This cannot be true of Amaziah, who put the murderer to death. Such, however, was the deplorable end of the king who had stood by the Temple pillar in his fair childhood, amid the shouts and trumpet-blasts of a rejoicing people. At that time all things seemed full of promise and of hope. Who could have anticipated that the boy whose head had been touched with the sacred oil and over-shadowed with the Testimony—the young king who had made a covenant with Jehovah, and had initiated the task of restoring the ruined Temple to its pristine beauty—would end his reign in earthquake and eclipse? If indeed he had been guilty of the black ingratitude and murderous apostasy which tradition laid to his charge, we see in his end the Nemesis of his ill-doing; yet we cannot but pity one who, after so long a reign, perished amid the spoliation of his people, and was not even allowed to end his days by the sore sickness into which he had fallen, but was hurried into the next world by the assassin's knife.

It is impossible not to hope that his deeds were less black than the Chronicler painted. He had made the priests feel his power and resentment, and their Levitic recorder was not likely to take a lenient view of his offences. He says that though Joash was buried in the City of David, he was not buried in the sepulchres of his fathers. The historian of the Kings, however, expressly says that "they buried him with his fathers

[1] We cannot understand the addition "on the way that goeth down to Silla." Silla is nowhere else referred to.

[2] LXX., 2 Chron. xxiv. 27, *καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ πάντες*.

in the City of David," and he was peaceably succeeded by Amaziah his son.

There is a curious, though it may be an accidental, circumstance about the name of the two conspirators who slew him. They are called "Jozacar, the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad, the son of Shomer, his servants." The names mean "Jehovah remembers," the son of "Hearer," and "Jehovah awards," the son of "Watcher"; and this strangely recalls the last words attributed in the Book of Chronicles to the martyred Zechariah. "Jehovah look upon it, and require it!" The Chronicler turns the names into "Zabad, the son of Shimeath, an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad, the son of Shimrith, a Moabitess." Does he record this to account for their murderous deed by the blood of hated nations which ran in their veins?

CHAPTER XV

AMAZIAH OF JUDAH

B.C. 796—783 (?)

2 KINGS xiv. 1—22

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."—MATT. xxvi. 52.

THE fate of Amaziah ("Jehovah is strong"), son of Joash of Judah, resembles in some respects that of his father. Both began to reign prosperously: the happiness of both ended in disaster. Amaziah at his accession was twenty-five years old. He was the son of a lady of Jerusalem named Jehoaddin. He reigned twenty-nine years, of which the later ones were passed in misery, peril, and degradation, and, like the unhappy Joash, and at about the same age, he fell the victim of domestic conspiracy.

The hereditary principle was too strongly established to enable the murderers of Joash to set it aside, but Amaziah was not at first strong enough to make any head against them. In time he became established in his kingdom, and then his earliest act was to bring the head conspirators, Jozacar and Jehozabad, to justice. It was noted as a most remarkable circumstance that he did not put to death their children, and extirpate their houses. In acting thus, if he were influenced by

a spirit of mercy, he showed himself before his time, but such mercy was completely contrary to the universal custom, and was also regarded as most impolitic. Even the comparatively merciful Greeks had the proverb, "Fool, who has murdered the sire, and left his sons to avenge him!"[1]

In epochs of the wild justice of revenge, when blood-feuds are an established and approved institution, the policy of letting vengeance only fall on the actual offender was regarded as fatal. Perhaps Amaziah felt it beyond his power to do more than bring the actual murderers to justice, and it is possible that their children may have been among the conspirators who, in his hour of shame, ultimately destroyed him.

The historian, it is true, attributes his conduct to magnanimity, or rather to his obedience to the law, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin." This is a reference to Deut. xxiv. 16, and is probably the independent comment of the writer who recorded the event two centuries later. In the gradual growth of a milder civilisation, and the more common dominance of legal justice, such a law may have come into force, as expressive of that voice of conscience which is to sincere nations the voice of God. That the Book of Deuteronomy, as a book, was not in existence in its present form till four reigns later we shall hereafter see strong reasons to believe. But even if any part of that book was in existence, it is not easy to understand how Amaziah would have been able to decide that the law which forbade the punishment of

[1] *Νήπιος ὃς πατέρα κτείνας υἱοὺς καταλείπει.* Comp. Q. Curtius, vi. 11 "Lege cautum erat ut propinqui eorum qui regi insidiati cum ipsis necarentur." Cic., *Ad Brut.*, 15.

the children with the offending parents was the law which he was bound to follow, when Moses and Joshua and other heroes of his race had acted on the olden principle. The innocent families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were represented as having been swallowed up with the ambitious heads of their houses. Joshua and all Israel had not only stoned Achan, but with him all his unoffending house. What, too, was the meaning of the law which established the five Cities of Refuge as the best way to protect the accidental homicide from the recognised and unrebuked actions of the Goel—the avenger of blood? The vengeance of a Goel was regarded, as it is in the East and South to this day, not as an implacable fierceness, but as a sacred duty, the neglect of which would cover him with infamy. Judging of our documents by the impartial light of honest criticism, it seems impossible to deny that the law of Deuteronomy was the law of an advancing civilisation, which became more mild as justice became firmer and more available. If Deuteronomy represents the legislation of Moses, we can only say that in this respect Amaziah was the first person who paid the slightest attention to it. Such exceptional obedience may well excite the notice of the historian, in whose pages we see that prophets like Ahijah, Elijah, and Elisha had, again and again, in accordance with the spirit of their times, contemplated the total excision, not only of erring kings, but even of their little children and their most distant kinsfolk.

Further:—We are told that Amaziah "did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah: he did according to all things *as Joash his father did*." The Chronicler also bestows his eulogy on Amaziah; but having told such dark stories of the apostasy of Joash

to Asherah-worship and his murder of the prophets, he could hardly add "as Joash his father did"; so he omits those words. The reservation that Amaziah did right, "yet not like David his father" (2 Kings xiv. 3), "but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chron. xxv. 2), is followed by the stock abatement about the *bamoth*, and the sacrifices and incense burnt in them. This was a crime in the eyes of writers in B.C. 540, but certainly not in the eyes of any king before the discovery of the "Book of the Law" in the reign of Josiah, B.C. 621. We are compelled, therefore, by simple truth, to ask, How came it that Amaziah should be so scrupulous as to observe the Deuteronomic law by not slaying the sons of his father's murderers, while he does not seem to be aware, any more than the best of his predecessors, that while he obeyed one precept he was violating the essence and spirit of the entire code in which the precept occurs? The one main object, the constantly repeated law of Deuteronomy, is the centralisation of all worship, and the rigid prohibition of every local place of sacrifice. Strange that Amaziah should have selected for attention a single precept, while he is profoundly unconscious of, or indifferent to, the fact that he is setting aside the regulation with which the law, as Deuteronomy represents it, begins and ends, and on which it incessantly insists!

Joash had been something of a weakling, as though the gloom of his early concealment in the Temple and the shadow of priestly dominance had paralysed his independence. Amaziah, on the other hand, born in the purple, was vigorous and restless. When he was secure upon the throne, and had done his duty to his father's memory, he bent his efforts to recover Edom. The Edomites had revolted in the days of his great-

grandfather Jehoram,[1] and since then "did tear perpetually,"[2] harassing with incessant raids the miserable fellahîn of Southern Judah. They reaped the crops of the settled inhabitants, cut down their fruit-trees, burnt their farmsteads, and carried their children into cruel and hopeless slavery. One verse tells us all that the historian knew, or cared to relate, of Amaziah's campaign. He only says that it was eminently successful. Amaziah confronted the Edomites in the Valley of Salt,[3] on the border of Edom, to the south of the Dead Sea, and inflicted upon them a signal defeat. He not only slaughtered ten thousand of them, but, advancing southwards, he stormed and captured Selah or Petra, their rocky capital, two days' journey north of Ezion-Geber, on the gulf of Akabah.[4] Considering the natural strength of Petra, amid its mountain-fastnesses, this was a victory of which he might well be proud, and he marked his prowess by changing the name of the city to Joktheel, "subdued by God." The historian, copying the ancient record before him, says that Selah continued to be so called "to this day."[5] This is a curious instance of close transcription, for it is certain that Selah can only have retained the name of Joktheel for a very short period, and had lost it long before the days of the Exile. Even in the reign of Ahaz (B.C. 735–715) the Edomites had so completely recovered

[1] 2 Kings viii. 20–22.

[2] Amos i. 11.

[3] The Valley (*Gê*) of Salt is "the plain of the Sabkah," about two miles broad, between the southern end of the Dead Sea and the hills which separate the Ghôr from the Arabah (Seetzen, *Reisen*, ii. 356; Robinson, *Researches*, ii. 450, 488). David had won a great victory there (2 Sam. viii. 13; Psalm lx., *title*).

[4] Selah, "a rock" (Πέτρα). Eusebius calls it Rekem.

[5] It is the name also of a city of Judah (Josh. xv. 38).

lost ground that they were able to make predatory excursions into Judah, and to threaten Hebron, which would have been obviously impossible if they were not masters of their own chief capital.[1] The district which Amaziah seems to have conquered was mainly west of the Arabah. He wished to restore Elath, and perhaps to carry out the old commerce with the Red Sea which Solomon began, and which had fired the ambition of Jehoshaphat. The conquest of Selah secured the road for his commercial caravans.

So far the older and better authorities. The Chronicler expands the story in his usual fashion, in which historical and critical verity is so often compelled, if not to suspect the disease of exaggeration and the bias of Levitism, at least to feel uncertainty as to the details. He says that Amaziah collected an army of three hundred thousand men of Judah, trained them to a high state of discipline, and armed them with spear and shield. He hired in addition one hundred thousand Israelitish mercenaries, mighty men of valour, at the heavy cost of one hundred talents of silver. He was rebuked by a prophet for employing Israelites, "because the Lord was not with them," so that if he used their aid he would certainly be defeated. Amaziah asked what he was to do for the hundred talents, and the prophet told him that Jehovah could give him much more than this.[2] So he dismissed his Ephraimites, who, returning home in great fury, "fell upon the cities of Judah," from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, killed three thousand of their inhabitants, and took much spoil. Amaziah, however, defeated the Edomites without their aid, and not only slew ten thousand, but took

[1] 2 Chron. xxviii. 17; Jos., *Antt.*, XII. viii. 6.

[2] 2 Chron. xxv. 5–10, 13.

captive ten thousand more, all of whom he dashed to pieces by hurling them from the top of the rock of Petra.[1]

Then, by an apostasy much more astounding than even that of his father Joash, he took home with him the idols of Mount Seir, worshipped them, and burnt incense before them. Jehovah sends a prophet to rebuke him for his senseless infatuation in worshipping the gods of the Edomites whom he had just so utterly defeated; but Amaziah returns him the insolent answer, "Who made thee of the king's council? Be silent, or I will put thee to death." The prophet met his ironical sneer with words of deeper meaning: "If I am not on *your* council, I am on God's. Because thou hast not hearkened to my counsel, I know that God has counselled to destroy thee."

The later writer thus accounts for the folly and overthrow of this valorous and hitherto eminently pious king. Certain it is, as we shall narrate in the next chapter, that, in spite of warning, he had the temerity to challenge to battle the warlike Joash ben-Jehoahaz of Israel, grandson of Jehu. The kings met at Beth-Shemesh, and Amaziah was utterly routed, with consequences so shameful to himself and to Jerusalem that he was never able to hold up his head again. He could but eat away his own heart in despair, a ruined man. After this he "lived" rather than reigned fifteen years longer.[2] The wall of Jerusalem, broken down near the Damascus Gate, on the side towards

[1] Κατακρημνισμός. This mode of execution prevailed till quite recent times in the little republic of Andorra.

[2] 2 Kings xiv. 17. The phrase that "he *lived* fifteen years" is unusual, and seems to imply that the historian saw,—

"In more of life, true life no more."

Israel, for a space of four hundred cubits, was a standing witness of the king's infatuated folly. His people were ashamed of him, and weary of him; and at last, seeing that nothing more could be expected of one whose spirit had evidently been broken from impetuosity into abjectness, they formed a conspiracy against him. To save his life he fled to the strong fort of Lachish, a royal Canaanite city, in the hills to the south-west of Judah.[1] But they pursued him thither, and even Lachish would not protect him. He was murdered. They threw the corpse upon a chariot, conveyed it to Jerusalem, and buried it in the sepulchres of his fathers. The people quietly elevated to the throne his son Azariah, then sixteen years old, who had been born the year before his father's crowning disgrace. What became of the conspirators we do not know. They were probably too strong to be brought to justice, and we are not told that Azariah even attempted to visit their crime upon their heads.

[1] Josh. x. 6, 31, xv. 39; 2 Kings xviii. 17; 2 Chron. xi. 9.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DYNASTY OF JEHU

		B.C.		
Jehoahaz...	...	814–797	... 2 Kings xiii.	1–9
Joash ...	...	797–781	... „	xiii. 10–21, xiv. 8–16
Jeroboam II.	...	781–740	... „	xiv. 23–29
Zechariah	...	740	... „	xv. 8–12

"Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."—1 SAM. ii. 30.

ISRAEL had scarcely ever sunk to so low a nadir of degradation as she did in the reign of the son of Jehu. We have already mentioned that some assign to his reign the ghastly story which we have narrated in our sketch of the work of Elisha. It is told in the sixth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, and seems to belong to the reign of Jehoram ben-Ahab; but it may have got displaced from this epoch of yet deeper wretchedness. The accounts of Jehoahaz in 2 Kings xiii. are evidently fragmentary and abrupt.

Jehoahaz reigned seventeen years.[1] Naturally, he did not disturb the calf-worship, which, like all his

[1] I have not thought it worth while to unravel by a series of uncertain conjectures the careless, and often self-contradictory, synchronism of the reigns of the kings in the two kingdoms. The compiler of these books evidently attached little or no importance to accurate chronology. For instance, the data of 2 Kings xiii. 1, 10, do not coincide; and instead of entering into tedious, doubtful, and

predecessors and successors, he regarded as a perfectly innocent symbolic adoration of Jehovah, whose name he bore and whose service he professed. Why should he do so? It had been established now for more than two centuries. His father, in spite of his passionate and ruthless zeal for Jehovah, had never attempted to disturb it. No prophet—not even Elijah nor Elisha, the practical establishers of his dynasty—had said one word to condemn it. It in no way rested on his conscience as an offence; and the formal condemnation of it by the historian only reflects the more enlightened judgment of the Southern Kingdom and of a later age. But according to the parenthesis which breaks the thread of this king's story (2 Kings xiii. 5, 6), he was guilty of a far more culpable defection from orthodox worship; for in his reign, the Asherah—the tree or pillar of the Tyrian nature-goddess—still remained in Samaria, and therefore must have had its worshippers. How it came there we cannot tell. Jezebel had set it up (1 Kings xvi. 33), with the connivance of Ahab. Jehu apparently had "put it away" with the great stêlê of Baal (2 Kings iii. 2), but, for some reason or other, he had not destroyed it. It now apparently occupied some public place, a symbol of decadence, and provocative of the wrath of Heaven.

Jehoahaz sank very low. Hazael's savage sword, not content with the devastation of Bashan and Gilead, wasted the west of Israel also in all its borders. The king became a mere vassal of his brutal neighbour at Damascus. So little of the barest semblance of

confusing guesses, I have contented myself throughout with giving for the reigns of the kings such dates, or approximate dates, as seem to result from the several notices compared with the contemporary annals of Assyria.

power was left him, that whereas, in the reign of David, Israel could muster an army of eight hundred thousand, and in the reign of Joash, the son and successor of Jehoahaz, Amaziah could hire from Israel one hundred thousand mighty men of valour as mercenaries, Jehoahaz was only allowed to maintain an army of ten chariots, fifty horsemen, and ten thousand infantry! In the picturesque phrase of the historian, "the King of Syria had threshed down Israel to the dust," in spite of all that Jehoahaz did, or tried to do, and "all his might." How completely helpless the Israelites were is shown by the fact that their armies could offer no opposition to the free passage of the Syrian troops through their land. Hazael did not regard them as threatening his rear; for, in the reign of Jehoahaz, he marched southwards, took the Philistine city of Gath, and threatened Jerusalem. Joash of Judah could only buy them off with the bribe of all his treasures, and according to the Chronicler they "destroyed all the princes of the people," and took great spoil to Damascus.[1]

Where was Elisha? After the anointing of Jehu he vanishes from the scene. Unless the narrative of the siege of Samaria has been displaced, we do not so much as once hear of him for nearly half a century.

The fearful depth of humiliation to which the king was reduced drove him to repentance. Wearied to death of the Syrian oppression of which he was the daily witness, and of the utter misery caused by prowling bands of Ammonites and Moabites—jackals who waited on the Syrian lion—Jehoahaz "besought the Lord,[2] and the Lord hearkened unto him, and gave

[1] 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

[2] 2 Kings xiii. 4; "besought," literally "*stroked the face of*" (1 Sam. xiii. 12; 1 Kings xiii. 6).

Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime." If this indeed refers to events which come out of place in the memoirs of Elisha; and if Jehoahaz ben-Jehu, not Jehoram ben-Ahab, was the king in whose reign the siege of Samaria was so marvellously raised, then Elisha may possibly be the temporary deliverer who is here alluded to.[1] On this supposition we may see a sign of the repentance of Jehoahaz in the shirt of sackcloth which he wore under his robes, as it became visible to his starving people when he rent his clothes on hearing the cannibal instincts which had driven mothers to devour their own children. But the respite must have been brief, since Hazael (ver. 22) oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. If this rearrangement of events be untenable, we must suppose that the repentance of Jehoahaz was only so far accepted, and his prayer so far heard, that the deliverance, which did not come in his own days, came in those of his son and of his grandson.

Of him and of his wretched reign we hear no more; but a very different epoch dawned with the accession of his son Joash, named after the contemporary King of Judah, Joash ben-Ahaziah.

In the Books of Kings and Chronicles Joash of Israel is condemned with the usual refrains about the sins of Jeroboam. No other sin is laid to his charge; and breaking the monotony of reprobation which tells us of every king of Israel without exception that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," Josephus boldly ventures to call him "a good man, and the antithesis to his father."

[1] The reference is usually explained of Jeroboam II.

He reigned sixteen years. At the beginning of his reign he found his country the despised prey, not only of Syria, but of the paltry neighbouring bandit-sheykhs who infested the east of the Jordan; he left it comparatively strong, prosperous, and independent.

In his reign we hear again of Elisha, now a very old man of past eighty years. Nearly half a century had elapsed since the grandfather of Joash had destroyed the house of Ahab at the prophet's command. News came to the king that Elisha was sick of a mortal sickness, and he naturally went to visit the death-bed of one who had called his dynasty to the throne, and had in earlier years played so memorable a part in the history of his country. He found the old man dying, and he wept over him, crying, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."[1] The address strikes us with some surprise. Elisha had indeed delivered Samaria more than once when the city had been reduced to direst extremity; but in spite of his prayers and of his presence, the sins of Israel and her kings had rendered this chariot of Israel of very small avail. The names of Ahab, Jehu, Jehoahaz, call up memories of a series of miseries and humiliations which had reduced Israel to the very verge of extinction. For sixty-three years Elisha had been the prophet of Israel; and though his public interpositions had been signal on several occasions, they had not been availing to prevent Ahab from becoming the vassal of Assyria, nor Israel from becoming the appanage of the dominion of that Hazael whom Elisha himself had anointed King of Syria, and who had become of all the enemies of his country the most persistent and the most implacable.

[1] Comp. 2 Kings ii. 12.

The narrative which follows is very singular. We must give it as it occurs, with but little apprehension of its exact significance.

Elisha, though Joash "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," seems to have regarded him with affection. He bade the youth take his bow,[1] and laid his feeble, trembling hands on the strong hands of the king. Then he ordered an attendant to fling open the lattice, and told the king to shoot eastward towards Gilead, the region whence the bands of Syria made their way over the Jordan. The king shot, and the fire came back into the old prophet's eye as he heard the arrow whistle eastward. He cried, "The arrow of Jehovah's deliverance, even the arrow of victory over Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them."[2] Then he bade the young king to take the sheaf of arrows, and smite towards the ground, as if he was striking down an enemy. Not understanding the significance of the act, the king made the sign of thrice striking the arrows downwards, and then naturally stopped.[3] But Elisha was angry—or at any rate grieved.[4] "You should have smitten five or six times," he said, "and then you would have smitten Syria to destruction. Now you shall only smite Syria thrice." The king's fault seems to have been lack of energy and faith.

There are in this story some peculiar elements which it is impossible to explain, but it has one beautiful

[1] Lit., "Make thine hand to ride upon thy bow." There is not the slightest taint of belomancy in the story (comp. Ezek. xxi. 21), nor does it allude to shooting an arrow into an enemy's country as a declaration of war (Virg., *Æn.*, ix. 57).

[2] Aphek, a name of good omen (1 Kings xx. 26–30).

[3] Thrice. Comp. Num. xxii. 28; Exod. xxiii. 17, etc.

[4] LXX., ἐλυπήθη.

and striking feature. It tells us of the death-bed of a prophet. Most of God's greatest prophets have perished amid the hatred of priests and worldlings. The progress of the truth they taught has been "from scaffold to scaffold, and from stake to stake."

"Careless seems the Great Avenger. History's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word—
Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the Future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own!"

Now and then, however, as an exception, a great prophetic teacher or reformer escapes the hatred of the priests and of the world, and dies in peace. Savonarola is burnt, Huss is burnt, but Wiclif dies in his bed at Lutterworth, and Luther died in peace at Eisleben. Elijah passed away in storm, and was seen no more. A king comes to weep by the death-bed of the aged Elisha. "For us," it has been said, "the scene at his bedside contains a lesson of comfort and even encouragement. Let us try to realise it. A man with no material power is dying in the capital of Israel. He is not rich: he holds no office which gives him any immediate control over the actions of men; he has but one weapon—the power of his word. Yet Israel's king stands weeping at his bedside—weeping because this inspired messenger of Jehovah is to be taken from him. In him both king and people will lose a mighty support, for this man is a greater strength to Israel than chariots and horsemen are. Joash does well to mourn for him, for he has had courage to wake the nation's conscience; the might of his personality has sufficed to turn them in the true direction, and rouse their moral and religious life. Such men as Elisha

everywhere and always give a strength to their people above the strength of armies, for the true blessings of a nation are reared on the foundations of its moral force."

The annals are here interrupted to introduce a posthumous miracle—unlike any other in the whole Bible—wrought by the bones of Elisha. He died, and they buried him, "giving him," as Josephus says, "a magnificent burial." As usual, the spring brought with it the marauding bands of Moabites. Some Israelites who were burying a man caught sight of them, and, anxious to escape, thrust the man into the sepulchre of Elisha, which happened to be nearest at hand. But when he was placed in the rocky tomb, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet. Doubtless the story rests on some real circumstance. There is, however, something singular in the turn of the original, which says (literally) that the man *went and touched* the bones of Elisha;[1] and there is proof that the story was told in varying forms, for Josephus says that it was the Moabite plunderers who had killed the man, and that he was thrown by them into Elisha's tomb.[2] It is easy to invent moral and spiritual lessons out of this incident, but not so easy to see what lesson is intended by it. Certainly there is not throughout Scripture any other passage which even *seems* to sanction any suspicions of magic potency in the relics of the dead.[3]

But Elisha's symbolic prophecy of deliverance from Syria was amply fulfilled. About this time Hazael had died, and had left his power in the feebler hands of his

[1] See R.V., margin.

[2] *Antt.*, IX. viii. 6.

[3] See Ecclus. xlviii. 13: "When he was dead, he prophesied in the tomb." (But the clause may be spurious.)

son Benhadad III. Jehoahaz had not been able to make any way against him (2 Kings xiii. 3), but Joash his son thrice met and thrice defeated him at Aphek. As a consequence of these victories, he won back all the cities which Hazael had taken from his father on the west of Jordan. The east of Jordan was never recovered. It fell under the shadow of Assyria, and was practically lost for ever to the tribes of Israel.

Whether Assyria lent her help to Joash under certain conditions we do not know. Certain it is that from this time the terror of Syria vanishes. The Assyrian king Rammânirâri III. about this time subjugated all Syria and its king, whom the tablets call Mari, perhaps the same as Benhadad III. In the next reign Damascus itself fell into the power of Jeroboam II., the son of Joash.

One more event, to which we have already alluded, is narrated in the reign of this prosperous and valiant king.

Amity had reigned for a century between Judah and Israel, the result of the politic-impolitic alliance which Jehoshaphat had sanctioned between his son Jehoram and the daughter of Jezebel. It was obviously most desirable that the two small kingdoms should be united as closely as possible by an offensive and defensive alliance. But the bond between them was broken by the overweening vanity of Amaziah ben-Joash of Judah. His victory over the Edomites, and his conquest of Petra, had puffed him up with the mistaken notion that he was a very great man and an invincible warrior. He had the wicked infatuation to kindle an unprovoked war against the Northern Tribes. It was the most wanton of the many instances in which, if Ephraim did not envy Judah, at least Judah vexed Ephraim,

Amaziah challenged Joash to come out to battle, that they might look one another in the face. He had not recognised the difference between fighting with and without the sanction of the God of battles.

Joash had on his hands enough of necessary and internecine war to make him more than indifferent to that bloody game. Moreover, as the superior of Amaziah in every way, he saw through his inflated emptiness. He knew that it was the worst possible policy for Judah and Israel to weaken each other in fratricidal war, while Syria threatened their northern and eastern frontiers, and while the tread of the mighty march of Assyria was echoing ominously in the ears of the nations from afar. Better and kinder feelings may have mingled with these wise convictions. He had no wish to destroy the poor fool who so vaingloriously provoked his superior might. His answer was one of the most crushingly contemptuous pieces of irony which history records, and yet it was eminently kindly and good-humoured. It was meant to save the King of Judah from advancing any further on the path of certain ruin.

"The thistle that was in Lebanon" (such was the apologue which he addressed to his would-be rival) "sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying: Give thy daughter to my son to wife.[1] The cedar took no sort of notice of the thistle's ludicrous presumption, but a wild beast that was in Lebanon passed by, and trod down the thistle."

It was the answer of a giant to a dwarf;[2] and to

[1] Possibly some matrimonial proposal may have lain behind the interchange of messages.

[2] Stade. For similar parables see Judg. ix. 8; Herod., i. 141 Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. 226.

make it quite clear to the humblest comprehension, Joash good-naturedly added: "You are puffed up with your victory over Edom: glory in this, and stay at home. Why by your vain meddling should you ruin yourself and Judah with you? Keep quiet: I have something else to do than to attend to you."

Happy had it been for Amaziah if he had taken warning! But vanity is a bad counsellor, and folly and self-deception—ill-matched pair—were whirling him to his doom. Seeing that he was bent on his own perdition, Joash took the initiative and marched to Beth-Shemesh, in the territory of Judah.[1] There the kings met, and there Amaziah was hopelessly defeated. His troops fled to their scattered homes, and he fell into the hands of his conqueror. Joash did not care to take any sanguinary revenge; but much as he despised his enemy, he thought it necessary to teach him and Judah the permanent lesson of not again meddling to their own hurt. He took the captive king with him to Jerusalem, which opened its gates without a blow.[2] We do not know whether, like a Roman conqueror, he entered it through the breach of four hundred cubits which he ordered them to make in the walls,[3] but otherwise he contented himself with spoil which would swell his treasure, and amply compensate for the expenses of the expedition which had been

[1] Beth-Shemesh, "the house of the sun." It is mentioned in 1 Sam. vi. 9, 12, and was a priestly city, and one of Solomon's store-cities (1 Kings iv. 9). It ultimately fell into the hands of the Philistines (2 Chron. xxviii. 18). It is not the Beth-Shemesh of Josh. xix. 22.

[2] Josephus says that this was the fault of Amaziah, whom Joash of Israel threatened with death if Jerusalem resisted.

[3] This implies that at least half the northern wall was dismantled—the wall towards Ephraim.

forced upon him. He ransacked Jerusalem for silver and gold; he made Obed-Edom, the treasurer, give up to him all the sacred vessels of the Temple, and all that was worth taking from the palace. He also took hostages—probably from among the number of the king's sons—to secure immunity from further intrusions. It is the first time in Scripture that hostages are mentioned. It is to his credit that he shed no blood, and was even content to leave his defeated challenger with the disgraced phantom of his kingly power, till, fifteen years later, he followed his father to the grave through the red path of murder at the hand of his own subjects.[1]

After this we hear no further records of this vigorous and able king, in whom the characteristics of his grandfather Jehu are reflected in softer outline. He left his son Jeroboam II. to continue his career of prosperity, and to advance Israel to a pitch of greatness which she had never yet attained, in which she rivalled the grandeur of the united kingdom in the earlier days of Solomon's dominion.

[1] Some have conjectured that Amaziah of Judah became more or less the vassal of Joash of Israel, and that the vassalage continued till after the death of Jeroboam II. (1) For Jeroboam II. held Elath till his death, when Uzziah recovered it (2 Kings xiv. 22), and he certainly could not have held this southern Judæan port if Judah was entirely independent; and (2) we read that Uzziah did not become king at all till the *twenty-seventh* year of Jeroboam II. But if Amaziah only survived Joash of Israel fifteen years (2 Kings xiv. 17), Uzziah must have succeeded in the *fifteenth* year of Jeroboam. Is the explanation to be found in the fact that up to that time—for twelve years—Jeroboam did not allow the Judæans to elect a king? or are these among the hopeless confusion of synchronism which cannot be reconciled at all with our present data?

CHAPTER XVII

THE DYNASTY OF JEHU (continued)—JEROBOAM II

B.C. 781—740

2 KINGS xiv. 23—29

IF we had only the history of the kings to depend upon, we should scarcely form an adequate conception either of the greatness of Jeroboam II. or of the condition of society which prevailed in Israel during his long and most prosperous reign of forty-one years (B.C. 781–740). In the Books of Chronicles he is merely mentioned accidentally in a genealogy. The Second Book of Kings only devotes one verse to him (xiv. 25) beyond the stock formulæ of connection so often repeated. That verse, however, gives us at least a glimpse of his great importance, for it tells us that "he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain." Those two lines sufficiently prove to us that he was by far the greatest and most powerful of all the kings of Israel, as he was also the longest-lived and had the longest reign. His victories flung a broad gleam of sunset over the afflicted kingdom, and, for a time, they might have beguiled the Israelites into lofty hopes for the future; but with the death of Jeroboam the light instantly faded away, and there was no after-glow.

And this sudden brightness, if it deceived others, did not deceive the prophets of the Lord. It happened in accordance with the promise of Jehovah given by Jonah, the son of Amittai, of Gath-Hepher;[1] but Amos and Hosea saw that the glory of the reign was hollow and delusive, and that the outward prosperity did but "skin and film the ulcerous place" below.

In truth, the possibility of this sudden outburst of success was due to the very enemy who, within a few years, was to grind Israel to powder. God pitied the deplorable overthrow of His chosen people: He saw that there was neither slave nor freeman—"neither any shut up, nor any left at large, nor any helper for Israel"; and in Jeroboam He gave them the saviour who had been granted to the penitence of Jehoahaz.[2] It was, so to speak, a last pledge to them of the love and mercy of Jehovah, which gave them a respite, and would fain have saved them altogether, if they had turned with their whole heart to Him. And, personally, Jeroboam II. seems to have been one of the better kings. Not a single crime is laid to his charge; for under the circumstances of its deep-rooted continuance through the reigns of all his predecessors, it cannot be deemed a heinous crime that he did not put down the symbolic cult of Jehovah by the cherubic emblems at Dan and Bethel. The fact that he had been named after the founder of the kingdom of Israel

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 25–27. There are other allusions to the historic events in 2 Kings x. 32, 33, xiii. 3–7, 22–25. Hitzig conjectures that Isa. xv., xvi., are "a burden of Moab" quoted from Jonah.

[2] 2 Kings xiii. 5, "The Lord gave Israel a saviour"; xiv. 27, "And He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash." Some suppose the saviour to be the Assyrian King.

shows that the kingdom was proud of the valiant and Heaven-commissioned rebel who had thrown off the yoke of the house of Solomon. The house of Jehu admired his policy and his institutions. The son of Nebat did not by any means appear in the eyes of his people as only worthy of the monotonous epitaph, "who made Israel to sin." It is true that now the voice of prophecy in Israel itself began to denounce the concomitants of the "calf-worship"; but the voices of the Jewish herdsman of Tekoa and of the Israelite Hosea probably raised but faint murmurs in the ears of the warrior-king, with whom they do not seem to have come into personal contact. In no case would he rank them as equal in importance with the fiery Elijah or the king-making Elisha, who had been for four generations the counsellor of his race. Neither of those great prophets had insisted on the Deuteronomic law of a centralised worship, nor had they denounced the revered local sanctuaries with which Israel had been so long familiar. Jonah, indeed—who, if legend be correct, had been the boy of Zarephath, and the personal attendant of Elijah—had predicted the king's unbroken success, and had neither made it conditional on a religious revolution, nor, so far as we know, had in any way censured the existing institutions.

What rendered Jeroboam's glory possible was the immediate paralysis and imminent ruin of the power of Syria. The Israelitish king was probably on good terms with Assyria, and, during this epoch, three Assyrian monarchs had struck blow after blow against the house of Hazael. Damascus and its dependencies had received shattering defeats at the hands of Rammânirâri III., Shalmaneser III. (782–772), and Assurdan III. (772–754). Rammânirâri had made

expeditions against Damascus (773) and Hazael (772); and Assurdan had invaded the Syrian domains in 767, 755, and 754. Syria had more than enough to do to hold her own in a struggle for life and death against her atrocious neighbour. With Uzziah in Judah, Jeroboam II. seems to have been on the friendliest terms; and probably Uzziah acted as a half-independent vassal, united with him by common interests. The day for Assyria to threaten Israel had not yet come. Syria lay in the path; and Assurdan III. had been succeeded by Assurnirari, who gave the world the unusual spectacle of a peaceful Assyrian king.

Jeroboam II., therefore, was free to enlarge his domains; and unless there be a little patriotic exaggeration in the extent and reality of his prowess, he exercised at least a nominal suzerainty over a realm nearly as extensive as that of David. He first advanced against Damascus, and so far "recovered" it as to make it acknowledge his rule.[1] His father Joash had won back all the Israelite cities which Benhadad III. had taken from Jehoahaz; and Jeroboam, if he did not absolutely reconquer the district east of Jordan, yet kept it in check and repressed the predatory incursions of the Emîrs of Moab and Ammon.[2] He thus

[1] It had owned the feudal supremacy of David (2 Sam. viii. 6), and Ahab had extorted the privilege of having bazaars there (1 Kings xx. 34). Considering how immense had been the resources of Damascus (2 Kings vi. 14), which had once been able to send to battle twelve thousand war-chariots (*Eponym Canon*, p. 108) under Benhadad, we see how fearfully the Syrian capital must have been weakened.

[2] If Isa. xv. 1, 2, refers to this invasion of Jeroboam II., as Hitzig first conjectured, we infer that he had taken both Ar of Moab (Rabbath) and Kir of Moab, a strong fortress on a hill, by night assaults; and that he had also captured Dibon, Nebo, and Medeba, and inflicted on them summary chastisement. It appears that the

extended the border of Israel to the sea of the Arabah and "the brook of willows" which divides Edom from Moab.[1] But this was not all. He pushed his conquests two hundred miles northwards of Samaria, and became lord of Hamath the Great. Ascending the gorge of the Litâny between the chains of Libanus and Anti-libanus, which formed the northern limit of Israel, and following the river to its source near Baalbek, he then descended the Valley of the Orontes, which constitutes the "pass" or "entering in" of Hamath Hamath was a town of the Hittites, the most powerful race of ancient Canaan. They were not of Semitic origin, but spoke a separate language. They were the last great branch of the once famous and dominant Khetas, whose former importance has only recently been revealed by their deciphered inscriptions. A century and a half earlier the Hamathites had thrown off the yoke of Solomon, and they governed nearly a hundred dependent cities. In alliance with the Phœnicians and Syrians, they had been valuable members of a league, which, though defeated, had long formed a barrier against the southward movement of the Assyrians. How striking was the conquest of this city by Jeroboam is shown by the title of "Hamath the Great," bestowed upon it by the contemporary prophets,[2] with whom literary prophecy begins.

Moabites had advanced northwards from the Arnon, while Hazael occupied Ramoth-Gilead, and had seized part of the tribe of Reuben. Jeroboam II. first expelled them, and then invaded their own proper country. Hitzig conjectures that Isa. xv., xvi., are really an old prophecy—perhaps by Jonah, son of Amittai—which Isaiah quotes, and to which he adds two verses (Isa. xvi. 12, 13). In such overthrow Moab must have learnt to be ashamed of Chemosh (Jer. xlviii. 13).

[1] Isa. xv. 7; Amos vi. 14.

[2] Amos vi. 2.

The result of these conquests was unwonted peace. Agriculture once more became possible, when the farmers of Israel were secure that their crops would not be reaped by plundering Bedouîn. Intercourse with neighbouring nations was revived, as in the golden days of Solomon, though it was regarded with suspicion.[1] Civilisation softened something of the old brutality. Prophecy assumed a different type, and literature began to dawn.

But to this state of things there was, as we learn from the contemporary prophets Amos and Hosea, a darker side. Of Jonah we know nothing more; for it is impossible to see in the Book of Jonah much more than a beautiful and edifying story, which may or may not rest on some surviving legends. It differs from every other prophetic book by beginning with the word "And," and its late origin and legendary character cannot any longer be reasonably disputed.[2] We may hope, therefore, that the Northern prophet, whose home was not far from Nazareth, was not quite the morose and ruthless grumbler so strikingly portrayed in the book which bears his name. Of any historical intervention of his in the affairs of Jeroboam we know nothing further than the recorded promise of the king's prosperity.

[1] Merchandise had hitherto been considered discreditable for a pure Jew, so that a trader is called a Canaanite (Hos. xii. 7, 8).

[2] See the writer's *Minor Prophets* ("Men of the Bible" Series), pp. 231–243.

CHAPTER XVIII

AMOS, HOSEA, AND THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

2 KINGS xiv. 23—29; xv. 8—12

"In them is plainest taught and easiest learnt
What makes a nation happy and keeps it so,
What ruins kingdoms and lays cities flat."
MILTON, *Paradise Regained.*

"We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is great,
Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of Fate:
But the soul is still oracular: amid the market's din
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within,
'They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin.'"
LOWELL.

AMOS and Hosea are the two earliest prophets whose "burdens" have come down to us. From them we gain a near insight into the internal condition of Israel in this day of her prosperity.

We see, first, that the prosperity was not unbroken. Though peace reigned, the people were not left to lapse unwarned into sloth and godlessness. The land had suffered from the horrible scourge of locusts, until every *carmel*—every garden of God on hill and plain—withered before them.[1] There had been widespread conflagrations;[2] there had been a visitation of pestilence; and, finally, there had been an earthquake so

[1] Amos vii. 1. Famine (iv. 6); drought (iv. 7, 8); yellow blight and locusts (iv. 9); pestilence (iv. 10); earthquake and burning (iv. 11).

[2] Amos vii. 4.

violent that it constituted an epoch from which dates were reckoned.[1] There were also two eclipses of the sun, which darkened with fear the minds of the superstitious.[2]

Nor was this the worst. Civilisation and commerce had brought luxury in their train, and all the bonds of morality had been relaxed. The country began to be comparatively depleted, and the innocent regularity of agricultural pursuits palled upon the young, who were seduced by the glittering excitement of the growing towns. All zeal for religion was looked on as archaic, and the splendour of formal services was regarded as a sufficient recognition of such gods as there were. As a natural consequence, the nobles and the wealthy classes were more and more infected with a gross materialism, which displayed itself in ostentatious furniture, and sumptuous palaces of precious marbles inlaid with ivory. The desire for such vanities increased the thirst for gold, and avarice replenished its exhausted coffers by grinding the faces of the poor, by defrauding the hireling of his wages, by selling the righteous for silver, the needy for handfuls of barley, and the poor for a pair of shoes. The degrading vice of intoxication acquired fresh vogue, and the gorgeous gluttonies of the rich were further disgraced by the shameful spectacle

[1] Amos i. 1, iii. 14, iv. 11, viii. 8; Zech. xiv. 5: "Ye shall flee like as ye fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah." Josephus says that in an earthquake a little before the birth of Christ ten thousand were buried under the ruined houses (*Antt.*, XV. v. 2), and he has many Rabbinic haggadoth to tell us about the earthquake, which, he says, happened at the moment when Uzziah burnt incense in the Temple (*Antt.*, IX. x. 4).

[2] According to Hind, they took place on June 15th, B.C. 763, and February 9th, B.C. 784. Amos alludes to the capture of Gath by Uzziah, of Calneh (*Ktesiphon*), and of Hamath (vi. 2; 2 Chron. xxvi. 6). Gath henceforth disappears from the Philistian Pentapolis (Amos i. 7, 8; Zeph. ii. 4; Zech. ix. 5).

of drunkards, who lolled for hours over the revelries which were inflamed by voluptuous music. Worst of all, the purity of family life was invaded and broken down. Throwing aside the old veiled seclusion of women in Oriental life, the ladies of Israel showed themselves in the streets in all "the bravery of their tinkling ornaments of gold," and sank into the adulterous courses stimulated by their pampered effrontery.

Such is the picture which we draw from the burning denunciations of the peasant-prophet of Tekoa. He was no prophet nor prophet's son, but a humble gatherer of sycomore-fruit, a toil which only fell to the humblest of the people.[1] Who is not afraid, he asks, when a lion roars? and how can a prophet be silent when the Lord God has spoken? Indignation had transformed and dilated him from a labourer into a seer, and had summoned him from the pastoral shades of his native village—whether in Judah or in Israel is uncertain—to denounce the more flagrant iniquities of the Northern capital.[2] First he proclaims

[1] Or "dresser of sycomore-trees" (R.V.). LXX., *κνίζων συκάμινα*; Vulg., *vellicans sycomoros*. The sycomore-fruit (fruit of the *Ficus sycomorus*, or wild fig) is ripened by puncturing it (Theoph., *H. Plant.*, iv. 2; Pliny, *H. N.*, xiii. 14).

[2] The well-known town of Tekoa had been Solomon's horse-fair, and had been fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 6). It lay in a wild country six miles south of Bethlehem (2 Chron. xx. 20; 1 Macc. ix. 33; Robinson, *Bibl. Res.*, i. 486). For a fuller account of these prophets, I must refer to my book on *The Minor Prophets* in the "Men of the Bible" Series. It has always been assumed that Amos belonged to the well-known Tekoa, and was therefore a subject of the Southern Kingdom. In recent days this has become uncertain. No sycomores grow or can grow on the bleak uplands of Tekoa (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 397); so that Jerome, in his preface to Amos, thinks that "brambles" are intended. Even Kimchi conjectured that Tekoa was an unknown town in the tribe of Asher. Amos's allusions to scenery are all applicable to the Northern landscape.

the vengeance of Jehovah upon the transgressions of the Philistines, of Tyre, of Edom, of Ammon, of Moab, and even of Judah; and then he turns with a crash upon apostatising Israel.[1] He speaks with unsparing plainness of their pitiless greed, their shameless debauchery, their exacting usury, their attempts to pervert even the abstinent Nazarites into intemperance, and to silence the prophets by opposition and obloquy. Jehovah was crushed under their violence.[2] And did they think to go unscathed after such black ingratitude? Nay! their mightiest should flee away naked in the day of defeat. Robbery was in their houses of ivory, and the few of them who should escape the spoiler should only be as when a shepherd tears out of the mouth of a lion two legs and a piece of an ear?[3] As for Bethel, their shrine—which he calls Bethaven, "House of Vanity," not Bethel, "House of God"—the horns of its altars should be cut off. Should oppression and licentiousness flourish? Jehovah would take them with hooks, and their children with fish-hooks, and their sacrifices at Bethel and Gilgal should be utterly unavailing. Drought, and blasting, and mildew, and wasting plague, and earth-convulsions like those which had swallowed Sodom and Gomorrha, from which they should only be plucked as a "firebrand out of the burning," should warn them that they must prepare to meet their God.[4] It was lamentable; but lamentation was vain, unless they would return to Jehovah, Lord of hosts,[5] and abandon the false worship

[1] Amos i. 1–ii. 5.
[2] Amos ii. 6–13.
[3] Amos iii. 9–15.
[4] Amos iv. 1–13.
[5] This title, "Jehovah-Tsebaoth," now begins to occur. It is not found in the Hexateuch. It probably means "Lord of the *starry hosts*." Contact with Assyria first made the Israelites acquainted

of Bethel, Beersheba, and Gilgal, and listen to the voice of the righteous, whom they now abhorred for his rebukes. They talked hypocritically about "the day of the Lord," but to them it should be blackness. They relied on feast days, and services, and sacrifices; but since they would not give the sacrifice of judgment and righteousness, for which alone God cared, they should be carried into captivity beyond Damascus: yes! even to that terrible Assyria with whose king they now were on friendly terms. They lay at ease on their carved couches at their delicate feasts, draining the wine-bowls, and glistering with fragrant oils, heedless of the impending doom which would smite the great house with breaches and the little house with clefts, and which should bring upon them an avenger who should afflict them from their conquered Hamath southwards even to the wady of the wilderness.[1] The threatened judgments of locusts and fire had been mitigated at the prophet's prayer, but nothing could avert the plumb-line of destruction which Jehovah held over them, and He would rise against the House of Jeroboam with His sword.[2] We infer from all that Amos and Hosea say that the calf-worship at Bethel (for Dan is not mentioned in this connexion[3]) had

with star-worship. Amos alludes to the Pleiades and Orion (v. 8: comp. Job ix. 9, xxxviii. 31). Star-worship is forbidden in Deuteronomy. In Amos v. 26 the true meaning is that the Israelites *would take with them, on their road to exile*, Sakkuth (Moloch?) and Kewan (the god-star Saturn).

[1] Amos vi. 1–14.

[2] Amos vii. 1–9.

[3] Strange as it may seem, the early authority for the existence of any calf at Dan is very slight, and the extreme uncertainty of the reading and interpretation in one main passage (1 Kings xii. 32) makes it at least possible that there were *two calves at Bethel*, and that

degenerated into an idolatry far more abject than it originally was. The familiarity of such multitudes of the people with Baal-worship and Asherah-worship had tended to obliterate the sense that the "calves" were cherubic emblems of Jehovah; and were it not for some confusions of this kind, it is inconceivable that Jehoram ben-Jehu should have restored the Asherah which his father had removed. Be that as it may, Bethel and Gilgal seem to have become centres of corruption. Dan is scarcely once alluded to as a scene of the calf-worship.

Others, then, might be deceived by the surface-glitter of extended empire in the days of Jeroboam II. Not so the true prophets. It has often happened—as to Persia, when, in B.C. 388, she dictated the Peace of Antalcidas, and to Papal Rome in the days of the Jubilee of 1300, and to Philip II. of Spain in the year of the Armada, and to Louis XIV. in 1667—that a nation has seemed to be at its zenith of pomp and power on the very eve of some tremendous catastrophe. Amos and Hosea saw that such a catastrophe was at hand for Israel, because they knew that Divine punishment inevitably dogs the heels of insolence and crime. The loftiness of Israel's privilege involved the utterness of her ruin. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."[1]

Such prophecies, so eloquent, so uncompromising, so varied, and so constantly disseminated among the people, first by public harangues, then in writing, could

at Dan there was no calf, but only the old idolatrous ephod of Micah, still served by the servant of Moses. See additional note at the end of the volume.

[1] Amos iii. 2.

no longer be neglected. Amos, with his natural culture, his rhythmic utterances, and his inextinguishable fire, was far different from the wild fanatics, with their hairy garments, and sudden movements, and long locks, and cries, and self-inflicted wounds, with whom Israel had been familiar since the days of Elijah whom they all imitated. So long as this inspired peasant confined himself to moral denunciations the aristocracy and priesthood of Samaria could afford comfortably to despise him. What were moral denunciations to them? What harm was there in ivory palaces and refined feasts? This man was a mere red socialist who tried to undermine the customs of society. The hold of the upper classes on the people, whom their exactions had burdened with hopeless debt, and whom they could with impunity crush into slavery, was too strong to be shaken by the "hysteric gush" of a philanthropic faddist and temperance fanatic like this. But when he had the enormous presumption to mention publicly the name of their victorious king, and to say that Jehovah would rise against him with the sword, it was time for the clergy to interfere, and to send the intruder back to his native obscurity.

So Amaziah, the priest of Bethel,[1] invoked the king's authority. "Amos," he said to the king, "hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel." The charge was grossly false, but it did well enough to serve the priest's purpose. "The land is not able to bear all his words."

That was true; for when nations have chosen to abide by their own vicious courses, and refuse to listen

[1] That the chief priest of Bethel bore the name "Jehovah is strong" shows once more that "calf-worship" was in no sense a *substitute* for the worship of Jehovah.

to the voice of warning, they are impatient of rebuke. They refuse to hear when God calls to them.

> "For when we in our viciousness grow hard,
> Oh misery on it! the wise gods seal our eyes;
> In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
> Adore our errors; laugh at us while we strut
> To our confusion."

The priest tried further to inflame the king's anger by telling him two more of Amos's supposed predictions. He had prophesied (which was a false inference) that Israel should be led away captive out of their own land,[1] and had also prophesied (which was a perversion of the fact) "that Jeroboam *should die* by the sword."

At the first prophecy Jeroboam probably smiled. It might indeed come true in the long-run. If he was a man of prescience as well as of prowess, he probably foresaw that the elements of ruin lurked in his transient success, and that though, for the present, Assyria was occupied in other directions, it was unlikely that the weaker Israel would escape the fate of the far more powerful Syria. As for the personal prophecy, he was strong, and was honoured, and had his army and his guards. He would take his chance. Nor does it seem to have troubled any one that Amos looked for the ultimate union of Israel with Judah. Since the time of Joash the inheritance of David had been but as "a ruined booth" (ix. 11); but Amos prophesied its restoration. This touch may have been added later, when he wrote and published his "burdens"; but he

[1] This was not quite accurate; he had rather prophesied the devastation of the high places (vii. 9). In fact, his words had often been very vague. "*Thus* will I do unto thee" (iv. 12).

did not hesitate to speak as if the two kingdoms were really and properly one.[1]

We are not told that Jeroboam II. interfered with the prophet in any way.[2] Had he done so, he would have been rebuked and denounced for it. He probably went no further than to allow the priest and the prophet to settle the matter between themselves. Perhaps he gave a contemptuous permission that, if Amaziah thought it worth while to send the prophet back into Judah, he might do so.

Armed with this nonchalant mandate, Amaziah, with more mildness and good-humour than might have been expected from one of his class, said to Amos, "O Seer,[3] go home, and eat thy bread, and prophesy to thy heart's content at home; but do not prophesy any more at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary and the king's court."

Amos obeyed perforce, but stopped to say that he had not prophesied out of his own mouth, but by Jehovah's bidding. He then hurled at the priest a message of doom as frightful as that which Jeremiah

[1] Amos ix. 11–15. Comp. Hos. iii. 5.

[2] The exaggerated haggadoth of later days say that Amaziah had Amos beaten with leaded thongs, and that he was carried home in a dying state (Epiphan., *Opp.*, ii. 145), to which there is a supposed allusion in Heb. xi. 35: ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτυμπανίσθησαν.

[3] We cannot be sure that the term "Seer" was meant to be contemptuous, although from 1 Sam. ix. 9 we should infer that the title had become somewhat obsolete. Further, we must bear in mind that it may not have been always easy for worldlings to distinguish between true prophets and the unprincipled pretenders who, about this time, succeeded in making the name and aspect of a prophet so complete a disgrace that men had carefully to disclaim it (Zech. xiii. 2–6). It is true that the heading of Amos (i. 1), which may not, however, be by the prophet himself, tells us of "the words which he *saw*" (*i.e.*, spoke as a seer), and he also disclaims the name of prophet (vii. 14).

pronounced upon Pashur, when that priest smote him on the face. His wife should be a harlot in the city; his sons and daughters should be slain; his inheritance should be divided; he should die in a polluted land; and Israel should go into captivity. And as for his mission, he justified it by the fact that he was not one of an hereditary or a professional community; he was no prophet or prophet's son. Such men might—like Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, and his four hundred abettors—be led into mere function and professionalism, into manufactured enthusiasm and simulated inspiration. From such communities freshness, unconventionality, courage, were hardly to be expected. They would philippise at times; they would get to love their order and their privileges better than their message, and themselves best of all. It is the tendency of organised bodies to be tempted into conventionality, and to sink into banded unions chiefly concerned in the protection of their own prestige. Not such was Amos. He was a peasant herdsman in whose heart had burned the inspiration of Jehovah and the wrath against moral misdoing till they had burst into flame. It was indignation against iniquity which had called Amos from the flocks and the sycomores to launch against an apostatising people the menace of doom. In that grief and indignation he heard the voice and received the mandate of the Lord of hosts. He heads the long line of literary prophets whose priceless utterances are preserved in the Old Testament. The inestimable value of their teaching lies most of all in the fact that they were—like Moses—preachers of the moral law; and that, like the Book of the Covenant, which is the most ancient and the most valuable part of the Laws

of the Pentateuch, they count external service as no better than the small dust of the balance in comparison with righteousness and true holiness.

The rest of the predictions of Amos were added at a later date. They dwelt on the certainty and the awful details of the coming overthrow; the doom of the idolaters of Gilgal and Beersheba; the inevitable swiftness of the catastrophe in which Samaria should be sifted like corn in a sieve in spite of her incorrigible security.[1] Yet the ruin should not be absolute. "Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd teareth out of the mouth of the lion two legs and the piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued, that sit in Samaria on the corner of a couch, and on the damask of a bed."

The Hebrew Prophets almost invariably weave together the triple strands of warning, exhortation, and hope. Hitherto Amos has not had a word of hope to utter. At last, however, he lets a glimpse of the rainbow irradiate the gloom. The overthrow of Israel should be accompanied by the restoration of the fallen booth of David, and, under the rule of a scion of that house, Israel should return from captivity to enjoy days of peaceful happiness, and to be rooted up no more.[2]

Hosea, the son of Beeri, was of a somewhat later date than Amos. He, too, "became electric," to flash into meaner and corrupted minds the conviction that formalism is nothing, and that moral sincerity is all in all. That which God requires is not ritual service, but truth in the inward parts. He is one of the

[1] Amos viii. 1–ix. 9, 10. [2] Amos ix. 11–15.

saddest of the prophets; but though he mingles prophecies of mercy with his menaces of wrath, the general tenor of his oracles is the same. He pictures the crimes of Ephraim by the image of domestic unfaithfulness, and bids Judah to take warning from the curse involved in her apostasy.[1] Many of his allusions touch upon the days of that deluge of anarchy which followed the death of Jeroboam II. (iv.–vi. 3). That he was a Northerner appears from the fact that he speaks of the King of Israel as "our king" (vii. 5). Yet he seems to blame the revolt of Jeroboam I. (i. 11, viii. 4), although a prophet had originated it, and he openly aspires after the reunion of the Twelve Tribes under a king of the House of David (iii. 5). He points more distinctly to Assyria, which he frequently names as the scourge of the Divine vengeance, and indicates how vain is the hope of the party which relied on the alliance of Egypt.[2] He speaks with far more distinct contempt of the cherub at Bethel and the shrine at Gilgal, and says scornfully, "Thy calf, O Samaria, has cast thee off."[3] Shalmaneser had taken Beth-Arbel, and dashed to pieces mother and children. Such would be the fate of the cities of Israel.[4] Yet Hosea, like Amos, cannot conclude with words of

[1] Hos. iv. 15–19.

[2] Hos. v. 13, vii. 11, viii. 9, ix. 3–6, xi. 5, xii. 1, xiv. 3. It must be borne in mind that the cuneiform inscriptions prove that Assyria had burst into sight like a lurid comet on the horizon far earlier than we had supposed. Jehu had paid tribute to Shalmaneser as far back as B.C. 842, more than a century before Menahem's tribute in 738. The destruction which Hosea prophesied took place within thirty-one years of his prophecies—probably in B.C. 722, when Sargon finished the siege of Samaria begun by Shalmaneser. The king Hoshea was perhaps taken captive before the siege.

[3] Hos. viii. 5, ix. 15.

[4] Hos. x. 13, 14.

wrath and woe, and he ends with a lovely song of the days when Ephraim should be restored, after her true repentance, by the loving tenderness of God.

Jeroboam II. must have been aware of some at least of these prophecies. Those of Hosea must have impressed him all the more because Hosea was a prophet of his own kingdom, and all of his allusions were to such ancient and famous shrines of Ephraim as Mizpeh, Tabor, Bethel, Gilgal, Shechem,[1] Jezreel, and Lebanon. He was the Jeremiah of the North, and a passionate patriotism breathes through his melancholy strains. Yet in the powerful rule of Jeroboam II. he can only see a godless militarism founded upon massacre (i. 4), and he felt himself to be the prophet of decadence. Page after page rings with wailing, and with denunciations of drunkenness, robbery, and whoredom—"swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and adultery" (iv. 2).

If Jeroboam was as wise and great as he seemed to have been, he must have seen with his own eyes the ominous clouds on the far horizon, and the deep-seated corruption which was eating like a cancer into the heart of his people. Probably, like many another great sovereign—like Marcus Aurelius when he noted the worthlessness of his son Commodus, like Charlemagne when he burst into tears at the sight of the ships of the Vikings—his thoughts were like those of the ancient and modern proverbs—"When I am dead, let earth be mixed with fire." We have no trace that Jeroboam treated Hosea as did those guilty priests to whom he was a rebuke, and who called him "a fool" and "mad" (ix. 7, 8, iv. 6–8, v. 2). Yet the aged king—he must have reached the unusual age

[1] Hos. vi. 9: for "by consent" read "towards Shechem."

of seventy-three at least, before he ended the longest and most successful reign in the annals of Israel—could hardly have anticipated that within half a year of his death his secure throne would be shaken to its foundation, his dynasty be hurled into oblivion, and that Israel, to whom, as long as he lived, mighty kingdoms had curtsied, should,

> "Like a forlorn and desperate castaway,
> Do shameful execution on herself."

Yet so it was. Jeroboam II. was succeeded by no less than six other kings, but he was the last who died a natural death. Every one of his successors fell a victim to the assassin or the conqueror. His son Zachariah ("Remembered by Jehovah") succeeded him (B.C. 740), the fourth in descent from Jehu. Considering the long reign of his father, he must have ascended the throne at a mature age. But he was the child of evil times. That he should not interrupt the "calf"-worship was a matter of course; but if he be the king of whom we catch a glimpse in Hos. vii. 2–7, we see that he partook deeply of the depravity of his day. We are there presented with a deplorable picture. There was thievishness at home, and bands of marauding bandits began to appear from abroad. The king was surrounded by a desperate knot of wicked counsellors, who fooled him to the top of his bent, and corrupted him to the utmost of his capacity. They were all scorners and adulterers, whose furious passions the prophet compares to the glowing heat of an oven heated by the baker. They made the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with lying flatteries. On the royal birthday, apparently at some public feast, this band of infamous revellers, who were the boon

companions of Zachariah, first made him sick with bottles of wine, and then having set an ambush in waiting, murdered the effeminate and self-indulgent debauchee before all the people.[1] The scene reads like the assassination of a Commodus or an Elagabalus. No one was likely to raise a hand in his favour. Like our Edward II., he was a weakling who followed a great and warlike father. It was evident that troublous times were near at hand, and nothing but the worst disasters could ensue if there was no one better than such a drunkard as Zachariah to stand at the helm of state.

So did the dynasty of the mighty Jehu expire like a torch blown out in stench and smoke.

Its close is memorable most of all because it evoked the magnificent moral and spiritual teaching of Hebrew prophecy. The ideal prophet and the ordinary priest are as necessarily opposed to each other as the saint and the formalist. The glory of prophecy lies in its recognition that right is always right, and wrong always wrong, apart from all expediency and all casuistry, apart from "all prejudices, private interests, and partial affections." "What Jehovah demands," they taught, "is righteousness—neither more nor less; what He hates is injustice. Sin or offence to the Deity is a thing of purely moral character. Morality is that for

[1] Hos. vii. 3–7. The allusions are vague, but we see a drunken king among his drunken princes, surrounded by wicked plotters who have flattered his vices. He is ignorant of his peril. The subjects aid the rulers in these abominations. All are blazing, like an oven, with passion and infamy, and only rest (as the baker does) to acquire new strength for inflaming their burning desires. At the dawn their treachery blazes into the crime of murder, and in the wine-sick fever-heat of the banquet the king is murdered by his corrupt intimates (see my *Minor Prophets*, p. 78).

the sake of which all other things exist; it is the most essential element of all sincere religion. It is no postulate, no idea, but a necessity and a fact; the most intensely living of human powers—Jehovah, the God of hosts. In wrath, in ruin, this holy reality makes its existence known; it annihilates all that is hollow and false."[1]

[1] Wellhausen, *Isr. and Jud.*, 85.

CHAPTER XIX

AZARIAH-UZZIAH (B.C. 783(?)—737) *JOTHAM* (B.C. 737—735)

2 KINGS XV. 1—7, 32—38

"This is vanity, and it is a sore sickness."—ECCLES. vi. 2.

BEFORE we watch the last "glimmerings and decays" of the Northern Kingdom, we must once more revert to the fortunes of the House of David. Judah partook of the better fortunes of Israel. She, too, enjoyed the respite caused by the crippling of the power of Syria, and the cessation from aggression of the Assyrian kings, who, for a century, were either unambitious monarchs like Assurdan, or were engaged in fighting on their own northern and eastern frontiers. Judah, too, like Israel, was happy in the long and wise governance of a faithful king.

This king was Azariah ("My strength is Jehovah"), the son of Amaziah. He is called Uzziah by the Chronicler, and in some verses of the brief references to his long reign in the Book of Kings. It is not certain that he was the eldest son of Amaziah;[1] but he was so distinctly the ablest, that, at the age of sixteen, he was chosen king by "all the people." His official

[1] Hence, perhaps, the expression that the people "took him." If Amaziah died at fifty-nine, he probably had other sons.

title to the world must have been Azariah, for in that form his name occurs in the Assyrian records. Uzziah seems to have been the more familiar title which he bore among his people.[1] There seems to be an allusion to both names—Jehovah-his-helper, and Jehovah-his-strength—in the Chronicles: "God *helped him*, and made him to prosper; and his name spread far abroad, and he was marvellously helped, *till he was strong*."

The Book of Kings only devotes a few verses to him; but from the Chronicler we learn much more about his prosperous activity. His first achievement was to recover and fortify the port of Elath, on the Red Sea,[2] and to reduce the Edomites to the position they had held in the earlier days of his father's reign. This gave security to his commerce, and at once "his name spread far abroad, even to the entering in of Egypt."

He next subdued the Philistines; took Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod; dismantled their fortifications, filled them with Hebrew colonists, and "smote all Palestine with a rod."[3]

He then chastised the roving Arabs of the Negeb or south country in Gur-Baal and Maon, and suppressed their plundering incursions.

His next achievement was to reduce the Ammonite

[1] Compare the interchange of the names Azariel and Uzziel (Exod. vi. 18) in 1 Chron. vi. 2, 18. Azariah means "Jehovah hath helped," and Uzziah "Strength of Jehovah." It is just possible that his name was changed at his accession, as the chief priest also was named Azariah, and confusion might otherwise have arisen.

[2] 2 Chron. xxvi. 2-15.

[3] Isa. xiv. 29. A mixed language arose in this district in consequence (Neh. xiii. 24; Zech. ix. 6). The word Palestine only applies strictly to the district of Philistia. Milton uses it, with his usual accuracy, in the description of Dagon as

That twice-battered god of Palestine."

Emîrs to the position of tributaries, and to enforce from them rights of pasturage for his large flocks, not only in the low country (*shephelah*), but in the southern wilderness (*midbar*), and in the *carmels* or fertile grounds among the Trans-Jordanic hills.

Having thus subdued his enemies on all sides, he turned his attention to home affairs—built towers, strengthened the walls of Jerusalem at its most assailable points, provided catapults and other instruments of war, and rendered a permanent benefit to Jerusalem by irrigation and the storing of rain-water in tanks.

All these improvements so greatly increased his wealth and importance that he was able to renew David's old force of heroes (Gibborim), and to increase their number from six hundred to two thousand six hundred, whom he carefully enrolled, equipped with armour, and trained in the use of engines of war. And he not only extended his boundaries southwards and eastwards, but appears to have been strong enough, after the death of Jeroboam II., to make an expedition northwards, and to have headed a Syrian coalition against Tiglath-Pileser III., in B.C. 738. He is mentioned in two notable fragments of the annals of the eighth year of this Assyrian king. He is there called Azrijahu, and both his forces and those of Hamath seem to have suffered a defeat.[1]

It is distressing to find that a king so good and so great ended his days in overwhelming and irretrievable

[1] Uzziah's opposition to Assyria—of which there seems to be no doubt, for he must be the Azrijahu of the *Eponym Canon*—took place about 738, and was a coalition movement. But it gives rise to great chronological and other difficulties. As the solution of these is at present only conjectural, I refer to Schrader (E. Tr.), ii. 211–219. He is called Azrijahu Jahudai.

misfortune. The glorious reign had a ghastly conclusion. All that the historian tells us is that "the Lord smote the king, so that he was a leper, and dwelt in a several [*i.e.*, a separate] house." The word rendered "a several house" may perhaps mean (as in the margin of the A.V.) "a lazar house," like the *Beit el Massakîn* or "house of the unfortunate," the hospital or abode of lepers, outside the walls of Jerusalem.[1] The rendering is uncertain, but it is by no means impossible that the prevalence of the affliction had, even in those early days, created a retreat for those thus smitten, especially as they formed a numerous class. Obviously the king could no more fulfil his royal duties. A leper becomes a horrible object, and no one would have been more anxious than the unhappy Azariah himself to conceal his aspect from the eyes of his people.[2] His son Jotham was set over the household; and though he is not called a regent or joint-king—for this institution does not seem to have existed among the ancient Hebrews—he acted as judge over the people of the land.

We are told that Isaiah wrote the annals of this king's reign, but we do not know whether it was from Isaiah's biography that the Chronicler took the story of the manner in which Uzziah was smitten with leprosy. The Chronicler says that his heart was puffed up with his successes and his prosperity, and that he was consequently led to thrust himself into the priest's

[1] 2 Kings xv. 5 (2 Chron. xxvi. 21, "a house of sickness"). LXX., *ἐν οἴκῳ ἀφφουσώθ*; Vulg., *in domo libera seorsim.* Comp. Lev. xiii. 46. Theodoret understands it that he was shut up privately in his own palace: *ἔνδον ἐν θαλάμῳ ὑπ' οὐδένος ὁρώμενος.* Symmachus, *ἐγκεκλεισμένος.*

[2] His misfortune must have made a deep impression, and is possibly alluded to in Hos. iv. 4: "For thy people are as they that strive with the priest."

office by burning incense in the Temple.[1] Solomon appears to have done the same without the least question of opposition; but now the times were changed, and Azariah, the high priest,[2] and eighty of his colleagues went in a body to prevent Uzziah, to rebuke him, and to order him out of the Holy Place.[3] The opposition kindled him into the fiercest anger, and at this moment of hot altercation the red spot of leprosy suddenly rose and burned upon his forehead. The priests looked with horror on the fatal sign; and the stricken king, himself horrified at this awful visitation of God, ceased to resist the priests, and rushed forth to relieve the Temple of his unclean presence, and to linger out the sad remnant of his days in the living death of that most dishonouring disease. Surely no man was ever smitten down from the summits of splendour to a lower abyss of unspeakable calamity! We can but trust that the misery only laid waste the few last years of his reign; for Jotham was twenty-five when he began to reign, and he must have been more than a mere boy when he was set to perform his father's duties.

So the glory of Uzziah faded into dust and darkness. At the age of sixty-eight death came as the welcome release from his miseries, and "they buried him with his fathers in the City of David." The Levitically

[1] The Chronicler attributes the good part of his reign to the influence of an unknown Zechariah, "who had understanding in the visions of God"; and says that when Zechariah died Uzziah altered for the worse.

[2] This high priest, Azariah, is only mentioned elsewhere in 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 20.

[3] Josephus says that he had put on a priestly robe, and that a great feast was going on, and that the earthquake (Amos i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5) happened at the moment, which broke the Temple roof, so that a sunbeam smote his head and produced the leprosy. We here see the growth of the Haggadah.

scrupulous Chronicler adds that he was not laid in the actual sepulchre of his fathers, but in a field of burial which belonged to them—"for they said, He is a leper." The general outline of his reign resembled that of his father's. It began well; it fell by pride; it closed in misery.

The annals of his son Jotham were not eventful, and he died at the age of forty-one or earlier. He is said to have reigned sixteen years, but there are insuperable difficulties about the chronology of his reign, which can only be solved by hazardous conjectures.[1] He was a good king, "howbeit the high places were not removed." The Chronicler speaks of him chiefly as a builder. He built or restored the northern gate of the Temple, and defended Judah with fortresses and towns. But the glory and strength of his father's reign faded away under his rule. He did indeed suppress a revolt of the Ammonites, and exacted from them a heavy indemnity; but shortly afterwards the inaction of Assyria led to an alliance between Pekah, King of Israel, and Rezin, King of Damascus; and these kings harassed Jotham—perhaps because he refused to become a member of their coalition. The good king must also have been pained by the signs of moral degeneracy all around him in the customs of his own people. It was "in the year that King Uzziah died" that Isaiah saw his first vision, and he gives us a deplorable picture of contemporary laxity. Whatever the king may have been, the princes were no better than "rulers of Sodom," and the people were "people of Gomorrha." There was abundance of lip-worship, but little sincerity; plentiful religionism, but no godliness. Superstition went

[1] For instance, two verses earlier (2 Kings xv. 30) we read of the twentieth year of Jotham.

hand in hand with formalism, and the scrupulosity of outward service was made a substitute for righteousness and true holiness. This was the deadliest characteristic of this epoch, as we find it portrayed in the first chapter of Isaiah. The faithful city had become a harlot—but not in outward semblance. She "reflected heaven on her surface, and hid Gomorrha in her heart." Righteousness had dwelt in her—but now murderers; but the murderers wore phylacteries, and for a pretence made long prayers. It was this deep-seated hypocrisy, this pretence of religion without the reality, which called forth the loudest crashes of Isaiah's thunder. There is more hope for a country avowedly guilty and irreligious than for one which makes its scrupulous ceremonialism a cloak of maliciousness. And thus there lay at the heart of Isaiah's message that protest for bare morality, as constituting the end and the essence of religion, which we find in all the earliest and greatest prophets:—

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom;
Give ear unto the Law of our God, ye people of Gomorrha!
To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord.
I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts;
And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.
When ye come to see My face, who hath required this at your hands, to trample My courts?
Bring no more vain oblations!
Incense is an abomination unto Me:
New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—
I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. . . .
Wash you! make you clean!"[1]

Of Jotham we hear nothing more. He died a natural

[1] Isa. i. 10–17.

death at an early age. If the years of his reign are counted from the time when his father's affliction devolved on him the responsibilities of office, it is probable that he did not long survive the illustrious leper, but was buried soon after him in the City of David his father.

CHAPTER XX

THE AGONY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

	B.C.		B.C.
Shallum	740	Pekahiah ...	737—735
Menahem	740—737	Pekah	735—734

2 KINGS xv. 8—31

"Blood toucheth blood."—Hos. iv. 2.

"The revolters are profuse in murders."—Hos. v. 2.

"They have set up kings, but not by Me: they have made princes, and I knew it not."—Hos. viii. 4.

"Non tam reges fuere quam fures, latrones, et tyranni."—WITSIUS, *Decaph.*, 326.

WITH the death of Zachariah begins the acute agony of Israel's dissolution. Four kings were murdered in forty years. Indeed, within two centuries, at least nine kings—Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zachariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah—had made the steps of the throne slippery with blood. Except in the house of Omri, all the kings of Israel either left no sons or left them to be slain. Amos, by his vision of the basket of summer fruit, had intimated that the sins of Israel were ripe for punishment, and the lesson had been emphasised by the paronomasia of *quîts*, "summer," and *queets*, "end."[1] The prophet had singled four out of many crimes as the cause of her ruin. They were (1) greedy oppression of the poor;

[1] Amos viii. 2.

(2) land-grabbing; (3) licentious and idolatrous revelries; (4) cruelty to poor debtors, and rioting on the proceeds of unjust gains. In their drunkenness they even tempted God's Nazarites to break their vows. "Behold," saith Jehovah, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Even women shared in the common intoxication, and showed themselves utterly shameless, so that Amos contemptuously calls them "fat cows of Bashan upon the mountain of Samaria," whom in punishment the brutal conqueror should drag by the hair out of their ivory palaces, as a fisherman drags his prey out of the water by hooks.[1]

Shallum, son of Jabesh, the unknown murderer of Zachariah and the usurper of his throne, suffered the fate of Zimri, and only reigned for one month. If his conspiracy was marked by the odious circumstances of treachery and corruption, which we infer from the allusions of Hosea, Shallum richly deserved the swift retribution which fell upon him. He seems to have destroyed Zachariah by means of his best affections—under the guise of friendship, in the midst of boon companionship. But the slayer of his master had no peace, and from the moment of his fruitless crime the unhappy country seems to have been plunged in the horrors of civil war. Some dim glimpses of the evils of the day are gained from the earlier Zechariah,[2] just as some dim glimpses of the horrors of Rome in the days of the later Cæsars may be seen in the Apocalypse. The prophet speaks of three shepherds cut off in one

[1] Amos iv. 1–3.

[2] It is probable that our present Book of Zechariah is composed of the works of three prophets of different dates, each of whom may have borne that name. See my *Minor Prophets* ("Men of the Bible" Series).

month, who abhorred God, and His soul was impatient at them.[1]

Just as Galba, Otho, and Vitellius flit across the stage of the Empire amid war and assassinations, so Zachariah and Shallum are swept away by "dagger-thrusts through the purple." Was there a third? Ewald and others think that they detect a shadowy outline of him and of his name in 2 Kings xv. 10. If so, his name was Kobolam, but we know no more of him beyond the fact that "he was, and is not." For the sacred annals are but little concerned with this bloody phantasmagoria of feeble kings, who ruled amid usurpation, anarchy, hostile attacks from without, and civil war within. "Israel," said Hosea, "hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. They have set up kings, but not by Me: they have made princes, and I knew it not." "They are all as hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings have fallen; there is none among them that calleth upon Me."[2]

It was perhaps during this distracted epoch that for one moment there was an attempt to place the ruling authority of the nation in the hands of the prophet himself. So it would appear from Zech. xi. 7–14. Of course these chapters may be allegorical throughout, as, in any case, they are in great part. But if so, it becomes more difficult to understand the meaning. What the prophet says is as follows:—

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[1] Zech. xi. 8. In 2 Kings xv. 10 the LXX. read *καὶ επάταξεν αὐτὸν ἐν κεβλαάμ*; and Ewald thinks that "before the people" (קֳבָל־עָם) is really a proper name of the third king in one month—"and *Kobolam* slew him." There is insufficient ground for this, though a similar name is found in Assyrian records.

[2] Hos. viii. 3, vii. 7.

First, as though he saw the terrible conflagration of the Assyrian tyranny rolling southwards, and felt it to be irresistible, he bids Lebanon open her doors, that the fire may devour her cedars. There is perhaps an allusion to the death of Jeroboam II. in the words, "Howl fir tree, for the cedar is fallen." He sees in vision the forces of devastation raging among the oaks of Bashan, the forest and the vintage, while the shepherds cry, and the ousted lions roar in vain. Then Jehovah bids him feed "the flock of the slaughter"—the flock sold remorselessly by its rich possessors, and slain, and left unpitied, as the people were despoiled by its nobles and its kings. The prophet undertakes the charge of the miserable flock, and takes two staves, one of which he calls "Prosperity," and the other "Union." While he was thus engaged three shepherds were cut off in one month,[1] whom he loathed, and who abhorred him. But he finds his task hopeless, and flings it up; and in sign that his covenant with the people is broken, he breaks his staff "Prosperity." The nation refused to pay him anything for his services, except a paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver, and these he disdainfully flung into the sacred treasury.[2] Then seeing that all hope of union between Israel and Judah was at an end, he broke his staff "Union." Lastly, Jehovah says He will raise up a foolish, neglectful, cruel shepherd who would care for nothing but to eat the flesh of the fat and break the hoofs of the flock. And as for this worthless shepherd, the sword should be upon his arm and in his right eye; his arm shall be dried up, and his right eye utterly darkened.

By this cruel and self-seeking shepherd is probably

[1] Zachariah, Shallum, Kobolam (?).

[2] Zech. xi. 1–17 (Heb. 13).

meant Menahem. He had been, according to Josephus, the captain of the guard, and was living at Tirzah, the old beautiful capital of the land. From Tirzah, where he occupied the position of the captain of the chariots, he marched on the ill-supported Shallum. Samaria apparently offered no protection to the usurper. Menahem defeated him and put him to death. Then he proceeded to enforce the allegiance of the rest of the country. An otherwise unknown town of the name of Tiphsach[1] ventured to resist him. Menahem conquered it, and perhaps thinking, as Machiavelli thought, that princes had better exhibit their utmost cruelty at first, to deter any further opposition, he let loose his ferocity on the town in a way which created a shuddering remembrance. As though he had been one of the ferocious heathen, who had never been restrained by the knowledge of God, he exhibited the extreme of callous brutality by ripping up all the women that were with child.[2] In this he followed the remorseless example of Hazael. Hosea had prophesied that this should be the fate of Samaria;[3] Amos had denounced the Ammonities for acting thus in the cities of Gilead;[4]

[1] That this was Thapsacus on the Euphrates (1 Kings iv. 24), and that Menahem was in a position to march northward three hundred miles, and offer so deadly and wanton an insult to the might of Assyria, is out of the question. The name means "a ford," and might apply to any town on a river. Thenius thinks the name is a clerical error for *Tappuach*, between Ephraim and Manasseh (Josh. xvii. 7, 8).

[2] Josephus says, *ὠμότητος ὑπερβολὴν οὐ καταλιπὼν οὐδὲ ἀγριότητος.* It is said that the same crime was committed in 1861 by a Mexican bandit. Machiavelli says, "He who violently and without just right usurps a crown must use cruelty, if cruelty becomes necessary, once for all" (*De princ.*, 8).

[3] 2 Kings viii. 12; Hos. xiii. 16.

[4] Amos i. 13.

Shalmaneser III. had, in B.C. 732, thus avenged himself on the resistance of Beth-Arbel,[1] and Assyria was ultimately to meet an analogous retribution,[2] as also was Babylon.[3] But that a king of Ephraim, of God's chosen people, should act thus to his own brethren was a horrible portent, ominous of swift destruction.

And the vengeance came. Menahem reigned, at least in name, for ten years; for the sword which had slain mothers with their unborn infants reduced the stricken people to terrified silence. But at this epoch Assyria woke once more from her lethargy, and became the scourge of God to the guilty people and their guiltier kings. For a whole century the Assyrians had either been governed by kings who had abjured the lust of blood and conquest, or had been too seriously occupied on their own eastern and northern frontiers to intermeddle with the southern kingdoms, or break down the barriers erected by the confederacy of Hamath and Damascus between Nineveh and the weaker principalities of Palestine. But now (B.C. 745) there came to the throne a king who, in Chaldæa, was known by the name of Pul, and in Assyria by the name of Tiglath-Pileser;[4] and being too formidable for any power to stay his path, he marched against Menahem. Already he was lord of the world from the Caspian to

[1] Hos. x. 14. This allusion is, however, uncertain. Shalmaneser III. is not elsewhere found abbreviated into Shalman. Some suppose him to be a Moabitish king, Salamannu, who was a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser. The LXX., Vulg., etc., identify him with the Zalmunna of Judg. viii. 18. Psalm lxxxiii. 11 renders the word *ex domo ejus qui judicavit Baal* (*i.e.*, Gideon). Beth-Arbel is either Arbela in Galilee, or Irbid, north-east of Pella.

[2] Nah. iii. 10.

[3] Isa. xiii. 16.

[4] The two predecessors of Tiglath-Pileser (*Tuklat-abal-isarra*) were Assurdayan and Assurnirari.

the Gulf of Persia; already he had subdued Babylonia, Elam, Media, Armenia, eastward—Mesopotamia and Syria westward. Who was Menahem, the petty usurper of a tenth-rate kingdom, that he should withstand his power or even retard his advance?

The cruel usurper was in no condition to resist him. The brand of Cain was on him and his kingdom. How could the weak, impoverished, harassed troops of Israel stand up in battle against those numberless serried ranks, or withstand their tremendous discipline? If the very name of Persia once struck terror into the brave Greeks before the spell of Persian ascendency was broken at Marathon, Thermopylæ, and Salamis, much more did the name of Assyria make the hearts of the wretched Israelites melt like water. They now for the first time saw those bearded warriors with their broad swords, their tremendous bows, their fierce, sensual faces, their thickset figures. In the language of the prophets we still hear the echo of the fears which they excited by their swift, unfaltering marches, their sleepless vigilance, their girded loins, stout sandals, and barbed arrows.[1]

"Their horses' hoofs," says Isaiah, "shall be like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver. And they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea; and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and distress, and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof."

Ancient Assyria lay beneath the Snowy Mountains of Kurdistan; and its capital, Nineveh—near Mosul,

[1] Isa. v. 26–29.

Kouyunjik, and Neby-Junus—lay six hundred miles from the Gulf of Persia. The people spoke, as their descendants still speak, a dialect of Syriac, akin both grammatically and structurally to Hebrew. Assyria was constantly at war with Babylonia; but for the most part the kings of Assyria held Babylon in subjection, and Tiglath-Pileser was a king of the Chaldæans under the name Pul, as well as a king of Nineveh.

Menahem was warrior enough to know how hopeless it was to struggle against these trained forces. He was not even secure on his own throne. He thought it best to offer himself without resistance as a feudatory, if the Assyrian King would confirm his sovereignty. Tiglath-Pileser did not think Menahem worth more trouble, and was graciously pleased to accept by way of bribe a tribute of a thousand talents of silver, or about £125,000. This, however, as we learn from the *Eponym Canon*, was not all. Menahem had to pay a further tribute year by year. Later on, in 738, Shalmaneser mentions Minik-himmi (Menahem), as well as Rasunnu (Rezin), among his tributaries.

The Assyrian withdrew, and Menahem had to exact this vast sum of money from his miserable subjects. To tax the poor was hopeless. He found that there were some sixty thousand persons who might be reckoned among the wealthier farmers and proprietors,[1] and from them he at once exacted fifty shekels of silver (more than £3) apiece. Probably they thought that to pay the sum demanded was not too heavy a price for the retirement of these frightful Assyrians, whose forces Tiglath-Pileser did not withdraw until he had the money in hand. The event took place in 738, and Tiglath-Pileser continued to reign till 727. How bitterly

[1] Comp. Job xx. 15; Ruth ii. 1.

the burden of foreign tribute was felt appears from Hos. viii. 9, 10, which should perhaps be rendered, "They are gone up to Assyria like a wild ass alone by himself. Ephraim hath hired lovers. And they begin to be minished by reason of the burden of the king of princes." "The king of princes" was the haughty title usurped by Tiglath-Pileser, who said, "Are not my princes all of them kings?" (Isa. x. 8).

All this was a fulfilment of what Hosea had foreseen:—

"Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment, because he was content to walk after vanity. Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and the house of Judah his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent unto an avenging king:[1] yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the House of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him." The Assyrian was irresistible, because he was the destined instrument of the wrath of God. The "mixing with the heathens" was a sin, and Israel in cooing to Assyria was like a foolish dove; but the day sometimes comes to doomed nations when no course can save them from the fate which they have provoked.[2]

[1] Hos. v. 11-13. Comp. x. 6: "It [Samaria] shall be carried to Assyria for a present unto King Jareb." Sayce (*Bab. and Orient. Records*, December 1887) thinks that Jareb may have been the original name of Sargon, and so too Neubauer, *Zeitschr. für Assyr.*, 1886. The Vulg. renders King Jareb *ad regem ultorem*, and so too Symmachus. Aquila and Theodotion have δικαζόμενον. It may be the name of an unknown king of Assyria, or of Pul, or of Sargon—R.V., margin, "a king that should contend."

[2] Hos. vii. 8-12.

Not long afterwards Menahem died, and he had sufficiently established his rule to be succeeded as a matter of course by his son Pekahiah. But

> "Revenge and wrong bring forth their kind;
> The foul cubs like their parents are."

Samaria had fearful object-lessons in the apparently immediate success of murder and rebellion. The prize looked near and splendid: the vengeance might be belated or might not come. Of Pekahiah we are told absolutely nothing but that he reigned two years, with this stereotyped addition, that "he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah" by continuing the calf-worship.[1] After this brief and uneventful reign, his captain Pekah got together fifty fierce Gileadites, and with the aid of two otherwise unknown friends, Argob and Arieh, murdered Pekahiah in his own harem.[2] Argob was probably so named from the district in Bashan, and Arieh was a fit name for a lion-faced Gadite (1 Chron. xii. 8).

The sacred historian troubles himself but little about these kings. His annals of them are brief to extreme meagreness. Like the prophet, he viewed them as God-abandoned phantoms of guilty royalty.

> "They that cry unto me, My God, we, Israel, know **thee.**
> Israel hath cast off that which is good:
> The enemy shall pursue him.
> They have set up kings, but not by Me;
> They have removed them, and I knew it not:
> Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols,
> That they may be cut off.
> He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria."

[1] Josephus says, *τῇ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκολουθήσας ὠμότητι.*

[2] 2 Kings xv. 25, A.V., "in the palace of the king's house" (*armon*), rather "fortress." For the character of the Gileadites see 1 Chron. xii. 8, xxvi. 31.

Probably Pekahiah was, as so often happens, the weak son of a vigorous father. The times could not tolerate incapable sovereigns; and the fact that Pekah not only maintained himself on the throne for twenty years,[1] but was able to take active steps of aggression against Jerusalem, seems to show that he was a man of some administrative capacity. If he had not achieved political and military importance, it would hardly have been worth while for a fierce and powerful king like Rezin, the last king of Syria, to form so close an alliance with him. Probably Rezin saw that his throne and his very existence were in danger, and Pekah wished with Rezin's aid to resist to the uttermost the encroachments of Assyria, and escape the burdensome tribute which Menahem had paid. Indeed, it may well be that Pekahiah's passive continuance of this tribute may have been distasteful to the people of the land, and that they condoned or even tacitly aided Pekah's rebellion in order to get rid of it, and to find protection in an abler monarch. It was the last, perhaps the only, chance for the kings of Syria and of Israel. As we hear no more of Hamath as a member of the alliance, we must suppose that it had now been reduced to impotence and vassalage by the all-powerful Assyrian. If, however, there was to be any over-

[1] The length of Pekah's reign is most doubtful. If the periods assigned to the reigns in the Northern and Southern Kingdoms be added together up to the Fall of Samaria in the sixth year of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 9, 10), it will be found that the Southern chronology is twenty years longer than the Northern. G. Smith would alter the text, and make Jeroboam II. reign fifty-one years and Pekah thirty years; others invent an interregnum of eleven years between Jeroboam II. and Zachariah, and an anarchy of nine years before Hoshea's accession; others shorten Pekah's reign to *one* year.

balance to the colossal menace of Nineveh, it could only be by a large confederacy; and it may have been the refusal of Jotham to join that confederacy, on the death of his father Uzziah, which caused the joint invasion of Rezin and Pekah to force him to accept their alliance or to suppress him altogether. In that case they might have formed a close alliance with Egypt, and the forces of the united South might, they fancied, prove to be a match for the forces of the North.[1]

Whatever designs they may have formed against Jotham, or to whatever extent they may have annoyed him, it was not till the reign of his son Ahaz that they became formidable and ruinous. Of this we shall say more in recounting the reign of Ahaz. All that we need now remark is that their bold aggression on Judah became the cause of utter destruction to them both. They advanced against Ahaz, and overran his helpless country. It was their object to depose the descendant of David, and to crown in his place a certain unnamed "son of *Tabeal*," whom Ewald supposed to have been a Syrian, but whose name may possibly furnish a specimen of the later Jewish device of Gematria.[2]

It is not impossible that behind these events we may find the efforts and yearnings of a party which cared more for Israel's unity than for David's throne. Such a party may easily have sprung up during the splendid, prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. It has been conjectured by some that the election of Uzziah by the people—delayed, according to one reckoning, for twelve years—was in reality the triumph of the party which

[1] 2 Kings xv. 37. [2] Vide *infra*.

felt an unquenchable allegiance to David's house. In Deut. xxxiii. Reuben is put before Judah; Jeshurun (*i.e.*, Israel) is magnified far more than Judah; and some Northern shrine in Zebulon, as well as the Temple, is celebrated as a sanctuary.[1] That there were men in Jerusalem who preferred Rezin and Pekahiah to their own king is clearly stated in Isaiah. He compares them to those who prefer a turbid torrent to a soft, sweet stream. "Because," he says, "this people despise the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, and take delight in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now, therefore, the Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria, and all his glory."[2] Isaiah seems to have had a contempt for the whole attack. He told Ahaz not to fear for the stumps of those two smoking firebrands Rezin, King of Syria, and the Israelitish usurper, whom he only condescends to call "Remaliah's son." He promises the trembling Ahaz that, since he had faithlessly *refused* a sign, God would give him a sign. The sign was that the young woman who accompanied Isaiah—perhaps his youthful wife—should bear a son, whose name should be called Immanuel; and that before the child Immanuel—whose designation, "God with us," was an omen of the loftiest hope—should be of an age to distinguish evil from good, the Northern land, which Ahaz abhorred, should be forsaken of both her kings.

The prophecy came true in every particular. Rezin and Pekah swept all before them, and besieged Jerusalem; but they wasted their time in vain before the fortifications which Jotham had strengthened and

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 19: "They [Zebulon] shall call the peoples unto the mountain: there shall they offer the sacrifices of righteousness."

[2] Isa. viii. 6, 7.

repaired. Obliged to raise the siege, Rezin carried his army southward, and indemnified himself by seizing Elath, by driving out the Judæan garrison, and replacing them with Syrians.[1] It was the last gleam of Syrian success, before the final overthrow of Damascus which prophecy had often and emphatically foretold.

Pekah also withdrew his forces—no doubt compelled to do so by the step which Ahaz took in his desperation. For now the King of Judah invoked the protection and invited the active interference of Tiglath-Pileser against his enemies—"to save him out of the hand of the King of Syria, and out of the hand of the King of Israel, who were risen up against him."

Rezin and Damascus first felt the might of the Assyrian's conquering arm. The account of his decisive conquest is preserved in the *Eponym Canon*, and the passages which refer to the defeat of the Syrians will be found in the First Appendix at the end of the volume. It appears from the monuments that Rezin (Rasannu) lost not only his kingdom, but his life.

It is the death-knell of Aramæan greatness, as Amos had foretold.

"Thus saith Jehovah:
For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four,
I will not turn away the punishment thereof;
Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:
But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael,
Which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.
And I will break the bar of Damascus,[2]
And cut off him that sitteth [on the throne] in the Valley of Aven,[3]

[1] Perhaps we should read Edomites (2 Kings xvi. 6).
[2] The bar of its city gate.
[3] Bikath-Aven—"The cleft of Aven"—Cœle Syria, or Hollow

And him that holdeth the sceptre from Beth-Eden:[1]
And the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir,[2]
Saith Jehovah."

Rezin was slain—how we know not; very probably by one of the horrible methods of torture—by being flayed alive, or decapitated, or having his lips and nose cut off—which were practised by these demon-kings of Nineveh.

Nor did Pekah escape. Tiglath-Pileser advanced against the northern part of his dominions, and afflicted the land of Zebulon and Naphtali. Ijon; Abel-beth-Maachah, the city of Elisha; Zanoah, the ancient sanctuary of Kedesh-Naphtali, the home of the hero Barak; Hazor, the former capital of the Canaanitish king Jabin; Gilead; Galilee,—all submitted to him, apparently without striking a serious blow. He dealt with the miserable inhabitants in the way familiar to kings of Assyria. He deported them *en masse* into a strange country of which they did not understand the language, and in which they were reduced to hopeless subjection, while he supplied their places by aliens from various parts of his own dominions. There could be no securer method of reducing to paralysis all their national aspirations. Strangers in a strange land, they forgot their nationality, forgot their religion, forgot their language, forgot their traditions. Their sole resource was to plunge into material pursuits, and to melt away into indistinguishable obliteration among

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Syria, still called by the Arabs El-Bukāa. Comp. Josh. xi. 17, xii. 7. Aven—or "Vanity"—is perhaps Heliopolis or Baalbek. Comp. Ezek. xxx. 17.

[1] Perhaps Beit el Jame, "House of Paradise"—about eight hours from Damascus (Porter, *Five Years in Syria*, i. 313).

[2] Kir, in Armenia—the land of their origin (Amos ix. 7).

the neighbouring heathen. It was the beginning of the Northern Captivity—of the loss of the Ten Tribes.

As Tiglath-Pileser thus permanently subdued and depopulated the land of the Northern Tribes, it is a Jewish tradition that at this time he carried away the golden "calf" from Dan among his spoils.[1] Scripture does not record the fact, though in Hosea (viii. 5) there may be an allusion to the fate of that at Bethel, whether the right version be "He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria," or "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off."[2] "The workman made it," he continues; "therefore it is not God: for the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces." And again (x. 5): "The people of Samaria shall fear because of the heifer of the House of Vanity: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the *chemarim* [*i.e.*, the black-robed false priests thereof] shall tremble for it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed. It [the idol] shall also be carried to Assyria for a present to King Combat."

For a time Pekah escaped; but unsuccess is fatal to a murderous usurper, weakened by the loss and plunder of dominions which he is unable to defend. Instead of wasting time in the siege of a strong city like Samaria, Tiglath-Pileser in all probability stirred up Hoshea, the

[1] But, after all, was there a golden calf at Dan? It is scarcely ever alluded to, and the notion that there was one may have arisen (1) from a corruption or mistaken rendering of the text in 1 Kings xii. 29, and (2) from the existence there of the idolatrous ephod. See Klostermann, *ad loc.*; Isa. ix. 8–17.

[2] LXX., Ἀποτρίψαι τὸν μόσχον σοῦ, Σαμάρεια; Vulg., *Projectus est vitulus tuus, Samaria.* Orelli renders it, "Abscheulich ist dein Kalb, O Samaria." In Jer. xlvi. 15 we read (of Egypt), "Why is thy strong one swept away?" where the true reading may be, "Hath Khaph [*i.e.*, Apis], thy chosen one, fled?" LXX., Ἆπις ὁ μόσχος σοῦ, ὁ ἐκλεκτός. So Amos had prophesied that the "god of Dan" and the "way of Beersheba" should fall for evermore (Amos viii. 14).

son of Elah, to rise in conspiracy against his master and slay him. For Pekah and Israel seem to have made light of the Northern raid. They said in their pride and stoutness of heart, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with new stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." Such pretence of security was ill-timed and senseless, and Isaiah denounced it. "Therefore," he said, "Jehovah hath set up against Israel the adversaries of Rezin [*i.e.*, the Assyrians], and hath stirred up his enemies; the Syrians on the east, and the Philistines on the west; and they have devoured Israel with open mouth. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. Yet the people have not turned unto Him that smote them, neither have they sought the Lord of hosts. Therefore Jehovah hath cut off from Israel palm-branch and rush in one day. The elder and the honourable man, he is the head; and the prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail. For they that lead this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are swallowed up."[1]

The following verses furnish one of the numerous pictures of the anarchy and abounding misery of these evil days. "For wickedness burneth as the fire: it devoureth the briers and thorns; yea, it kindleth in the thickets of the forest, and they roll upwards in thick clouds of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land burnt up; the people also are the fuel of fire: *no man spareth his brother.* And one shall snatch on the right, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall *eat every man the flesh of his own arm*: Manasseh,

[1] Isa. ix. 11-16. With this passage comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4; Hos. vii. 9, 10.

Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still."

We are told in the Book of Kings that Pekah reigned for twenty years; but some of these later reigns must be shortened to suit the exigencies of known chronological data. It seems probable that he occupied the throne for a much shorter time.[1]

Such was the weakened, harassed, vassal kingdom—the gaunt spectre of itself—to the throne of which, after a period of anarchy and chaos, Hoshea, by conspiracy and murder, succeeded as the miserable feudatory of Assyria.

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[1] Tiglath-Pileser says: "Pakaha, their king, I killed: Ausi [Hoshea] I placed over them. The distant land of Bit-Khumri [the "house of Omri"]—*the whole of its inhabitants*, with their goods—I carried away to Asshur" (B.C. 734). In this year he mentions Ahaz among his tributaries.

CHAPTER XXI

HOSHEA, AND THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

B.C. 734—725

2 KINGS xvii. 1—41

"As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water."—Hos. x. 7.

AS a matter of convenience, we follow our English Bible in calling the prophet by the name Hos*ea*, and the nineteenth, last, and best king of Israel Hos*hea*. The names, however, are identical (הוֹשֵׁעַ), and mean "Salvation"—the name borne by Joshua also in his earlier days. In the irony of history the name of the last king of Ephraim was thus identical with that of her earliest and greatest hero, just as the last of Roman emperors bore the double name of the Founder of Rome and the Founder of the Empire—Romulus Augustulus. By a yet deeper irony of events the king in whose reign came the final precipitation of ruin wore the name which signified deliverance from it.

And more and more, as time went on, the prophet Hosea felt that he had no word of present hope or comfort for the king his namesake. It was the more brilliant lot of Isaiah, in the Southern Kingdom, to kindle the ardour of a generous courage. Like Tyrtæus, who roused the Spartans to feel their own greatness—

like Demosthenes, who hurled the might of Athens against Philip of Macedon—like Chatham, "bidding England be of good cheer, and hurl defiance at her foes"—like Pitt, pouring forth, in the days of the Napoleonic terror, "the indomitable language of courage and of hope,"—Isaiah was missioned to encourage Judah to despise first the mighty Syrian, and then the mightier Assyrian. Far different was the lot of Hosea, who could only be the denouncer of an inevitable doom. His sad function was like that of Phocion after Chæroneia, of Hannibal after Zama, of Thiers after Sedan: he had to utter the Cassandra-voices of prophecy, which his besotted and demented contemporaries—among whom the priests were the worst of all[1]—despised and flouted until the time for repentance had gone by for ever.

True it is that Hosea could not be content—what true heart could?—to breathe nothing but the language of reprobation and despair. Israel had been "yoked to his two transgressions,"[2] but Jehovah could not give up His love for His chosen people:—

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?
How shall I surrender thee, Israel?
How shall I make thee as Admah?
How shall I treat thee as Zeboim?
Mine heart is turned within Me;
I am wholly filled with compassion!

[1] Hos. iv. 4; v. 1, "Hear ye this, O priests . . ye have been a snare on Mizpah," etc.; vi. 9, "The company of the priests murder by the way to Shechem."

[2] Hos. x. 10 (so. R.V., and in the main the versions after the Hebrew margin). LXX., *ἐν τῷ παιδεύεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἐν ταῖς δύσιν ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν*; Vulg., *cum corripientur propter duas iniquitates suas*"; A.V., "When they shall bind themselves in their two furrows." I believe that the "*two* iniquities" may mean *two* cherubs at Bethel. See x. 15: "So shall Bethel do unto you because of the evil of your evil"

I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim:
For I am God, and not man.
The Holy One in the midst of thee!
I will not come to exterminate!
They shall come after Jehovah as after a lion that roars!
For he shall roar, and his sons shall come hurrying from the west,
They shall come hurrying as a bird out of Egypt,
And as a dove out of the land of Assyria;
And I will cause them to dwell in their houses,
Saith Jehovah."[1]

Alas! the gleam of alleviation was imaginary rather than actual. The prophet's wish was father to his thought. He had prophesied that Israel should be scattered in all lands (ix. 3, 12, 17, xiii. 3–16). This was true; and it did not prove true, except in some higher ideal sense, that "Israel shall again dwell in his own land" (xiv. 4–7) in prosperity and joy.

The date of Hoshea's accession is uncertain, and we cannot tell in what sense we are to understand his reign as having lasted "nine years."[2] We have no grounds for accepting the statement of Josephus (*Antt.*, IX. xiii. 1), that Hoshea had been a friend of Pekah and plotted against him. Tiglath-Pileser expressly says that he himself slew Pekah and appointed Hoshea.[3] His must have been, at the best, a pitiful and humiliating reign. He owed his purely vassal sovereignty to Assyrian patronage. He probably did as well for Israel as was in his power. Singular to relate, he is the only one of all the kings of Israel of whom the historian has a word of commendation; for while we

[1] Hos. xi. 8–11.

[2] 2 Kings xvii. 1 is inconsistent with xv. 30, 33, and it is wholly useless for our purpose to enter into complicated chronological hypotheses, every one of which may be erroneous.

[3] Schrader, *K. A. T.*, p. 255.

are told that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," it is added that it was "not as the kings of Israel that were before him." But we do not know wherein either his evil-doing or his superiority consisted. The Rabbis guess that he did not replace the golden calf at Dan which Tiglath-Pileser had taken away (Hos. x. 6); or that he did not prevent his subjects from going to Hezekiah's passover.[1] "It seems like a harsh jest," says Ewald, "that this Hoshea, who was better than all his predecessors, was to be the last king." But so it has often been in history. The vengeance of the French Revolution smote the innocent and harmless Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette—not Louis XIV., or Louis XV and Madame du Pompadour.

His patron Tiglath-Pileser ended his magnificent reign of conquest in 727, soon after he had seated Hoshea on the throne. The removal of his strong grasp on the helm caused immediate revolt. Phœnicia especially asserted her independence against Shalmaneser IV. He seems to have spent five years in an unavailing attempt to capture Island-Tyre. Meanwhile, the internal troubles which had harassed and weakened Egypt ceased, and a strong Ethiopian king named Sabaco established his rule over the whole country.[2]

[1] *Seder Olam*, xxii. 2; 2 Chron. xxx. 6–11.

[2] See Herod., ii. 137; called So (Heb., Sô or Seve) in 2 Kings xvii. 4. Perhaps Shebek, the founder of the twenty-fifth dynasty. LXX., Σηγώρ; Vulg., *Sua*; Manetho, *Sabachon*. In the *Eponym Canon* he is called an Egyptian general, *Sibakhi*, who helped Gaza against Assyria, and was defeated. The *ka* appended at the end of his name (Egyptian Shaba-ka) is thought by some to be the Cushite article. The race of the priest Hirhor died out with Piankhi, and the Ethiopians elected a noble named Kashta. Shabak was his son. He conquered Sais, and burnt his rival Bek-en-raut alive (B.C. 724). His dynasty ruled for fifty years; he was succeeded by Sevechus (Shabatok), and he by Tehrak (Tirhakah).

It was perhaps the hope that Phœnicia might hold out against the Assyrian, and that the Egyptian might protect Samaria, which kindled in the mind of Hoshea the delusive plan of freeing himself and his impoverished land from the grinding tribute imposed by Nineveh. While Shalmaneser[1] was trying to quell Tyre, Hoshea, having received promises of assistance from Sabaco, withheld the "presents"—the *minchah*, as the tribute is euphemistically called—which he had hitherto paid. Seeing the danger of a powerful coalition, Shalmaneser swept down on Samaria in 724. Possibly he defeated the army of Israel in the plain of Jezreel (Hos. i. 5), and got hold of the person of Hoshea. Josephus says that he "besieged him"; but the sacred historian only tells us that "he shut him up, and bound him in prison." Whether Hoshea was taken in battle, or betrayed by the Assyrian party in Samaria, or whether he went in person to see if he could pacify the ruthless conqueror, he henceforth disappears from history "like foam"—or like a chip or a bubble—"upon the water." We do not know whether he was put to death, but we infer from an allusion in Micah that he was subjected to the cruel indignities in which the Assyrians delighted; for the prophet says, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek."[2] Perhaps in the title "Judge" (Shophet, *suffes*) we may see a sign that Hoshea's royalty was little more than the shadow of a name.

Having thus got rid of the king, Shalmaneser proceeded to invest the capital. But Samaria was strongly fortified upon its hill, and the Jewish race has again

[1] His name means "Salmân, pardon." We have no monuments or inscriptions of this king; only an imperial weight.

[2] Mic. v. 1

and again shown—as it showed so conspicuously in the final crisis of its destiny, when Jerusalem defied the terrible armies of Rome—that with walls to protect them they could pluck up a terrible courage and endurance from despair. Strong as Assyria was, the capital of Ephraim for three years resisted her beleaguering host and her crashing battering-rams. About all the anguish which prevailed within the city, and the wild vicissitudes of orgy and starvation, history is silent. But prophecy tells us that the sorrows of a travailing woman came upon the now kingless city. They drank to the dregs the cup of fury.[1] The saddest Northern prophet, "the Jeremiah of Israel," sings the dirge of Israel's saddest king.[2]

"I am become to them as a lion;
As a leopard will I watch by the way;
I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps,
And rend the caul of their heart,
And there will I devour them like a lioness:
The beast of the field shall tear them.
Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities
And thy judges, of whom thou saidst, 'Give me a king and prince'?
I give thee a king in Mine anger,
And take him away in My wrath."

For three years Samaria held out. During the siege Shalmaneser died, and was succeeded by Sargon, who—though he vaguely talks of "the kings his ancestors," and says that he had been preceded by three hundred and thirty Assyrian dynasts—never names his father, and seems to have been a usurping general.[3]

[1] Hos. xiii. 13.

[2] Hos. xiii. 7-11. The prophecy is rhythmic, though not written in actual poetry.

[3] Till the discovery of the Assyrian records, Sargon (Sharru-kenu, 'the faithful king') was but a name. The Jews knew but little of

Sabaco remained inactive, and basely deserted the miserable people which had relied on his protection. In this conduct Egypt was true to its historic character of untrustworthiness and inertness. Both in Israel and in Judah there were two political parties. One relied on the strength of Egypt; the other counselled submission to Assyria, or—in the hour when it became necessary to defy Assyria—confidence in God. Egypt was as frail a support as one of her own paper-reeds, which bent under the weight, and broke and ran into the hand of every one who leaned on it.

Sargon did not raze the city, and we see from the *Eponym Canon* that its inhabitants were still strong enough some years later to take part in a futile revolt. But we have one dreadful glimpse of the horrors which he inflicted upon it. They were the inevitable punish-

him. He is but once mentioned in Scripture (Isa. xx. 1), and was probably confused by some Jews with other kings. Yet he reigned sixteen years (722–705), and his records give the annals of fifteen campaigns. In 720 he crushed a confederacy headed by Yahubid of Hamath, and reduced that city to a "heap of ruins." He then advanced against Hanno, King of Gaza, who was in alliance with Sabaco, and defeated the combined forces of the Philistines and Egyptians at Raphia, half-way between Gaza and the Wady-el-Arish, "the torrent [*nachal*] of Egypt." Sargon was at the time too much occupied with other enemies to pursue his advantage over Egypt; for Armenia, Media, and other countries needed his attention. This encouraged Ashdod to rebel, and its king, Azuri, refused his tribute (see Isa. xx. 1). Sargon deposed him, and put his brother Ahimit in his place. Relying on Egyptian promises, Philistia joined Judah, Edom, and Moab in defying Assyria. They deposed Ahimit as an Assyrian nominee, and put Yaman in his place. Egypt, as usual, failed to help, and in 711 the Assyrian Turtan, or Commander-in-chief, took Ashdod after three years' resistance, and carried its people into captivity. The punishment of Egypt was reserved for the subsequent reigns of Esarhaddon (681–668) and Assurbanipal. See Driver's *Isaiah xlv.* (Isa. xx.). Isa. xiv. 29–32 is an ode of triumph for the Fall of Philistia.

ment of every conquered city which had dared to resist the Assyrian arm.

> "Samaria shall bear her guilt,
> For she hath rebelled against her God.
> They shall fall by the sword:
> Their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
> And their women in child shall be ripped up."[1]

Sargon's own record of the matter on the tablets at Khorsabad is: "I besieged, took, and occupied the city of Samaria, and carried into captivity twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty of its inhabitants. I changed the former government of this country, and placed over it lieutenants of my own. And Sebeh, Sultan of Egypt, came to Raphia to fight against me. They met me, and I routed them. Sebeh fled."[2] The Assyrians were occupied in the unsuccessful siege of Tyre between 720–715, during which years Sargon put down Yahubid of Hamath, whose revolt had been aided by Damascus and Samaria. In 710 he marched against Ashdod (Isa. xx. 1). In 709 he defeated Merodach-Baladan at Dur-Yakin, and reconquered Chaldæa, deporting some of the population into Samaria. In 704, in the fifteenth year of his reign, he was assassinated, after a career of victory. He inscribes on his palace at Khorsabad a prayer to his god Assur, that, after his toils and conquests, "I may be preserved for the long years of a long life, for the happiness of my body, for the satisfaction of my heart. May I accumulate in this palace immense treasures, the booties of all countries, the products of mountains and valleys." Assur and the gods of Chaldæa were invoked in vain;

[1] Hos. xiii. 16.

[2] See De Hincks in *Journ. of Sacr. Lit.*, October 1858; Layard, *Nin. and Bab.*, i. 148.

the prayer was scattered to the winds, and the murderer's dagger was the comment on Sargon's happy anticipations of peace and splendour.

Israel fell unpitied by her southern neighbour, for Judah was still smarting under memories of the old contempt and injury of Joash ben-Jehoahaz, and the more recent wrongs inflicted by Pekah and Rezin. Isaiah exults over the fate of Samaria, while he points the moral of her fall to the drunken priests and prophets of Jerusalem. "Woe," he says, "to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are smitten down with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one [*i.e.*, the Assyrian]; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty water overflowing, shall he cast down to the earth with violence. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden underfoot: and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up."[1] Israel had begun in hostility to Judah, and perished by it at last.

Such, then, was the end of the once brilliant kingdom of Israel—the kingdom which, even so late as the reign of Jeroboam II., seemed to have a great future before it. No one could have foreseen beforehand that, when, with the prophetic encouragement of Ahijah, Jeroboam I. established his sovereignty over the greater, richer, and more flourishing part of the land assigned to the sons of Jacob, the new kingdom should fall into utter ruin and destruction after only two and a half centuries

[1] Isa. xxviii. 1-4.

of existence, and its tribes melt away amid the surrounding nations, and sink into a mixed and semi-heathen race without any further nationality or distinctive history. It seemed far less probable that the mere fragment of the Southern Kingdom, after retaining its separate existence for more than one hundred and sixty years longer than its more powerful brother, should continue to endure as a nation till the end of time. Such was the design of God's providence, and we know no more. The Northern Kingdom had, up to this time, produced the greatest and most numerous prophets—Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Nahum, and many more.[1] It had also produced the loveliest and most enduring poetry in the Song of Songs, the Song of Deborah, and other contributions to the Books of Jashar, and of the Wars of Jehovah. It had also brought into vigour the earliest and best historic literature, the narratives of the Elohist and the Jehovist. These immortal legacies of the religious spirit of the Northern Kingdom were incomparably superior in moral and enduring value to the Levitic jejuneness of the Priestly Code, with its hierarchic interests and ineffectual rules, which, in the exaggerated supremacy attached to rites, proved to be the final blight of an unspiritual Judaism. Israel had also been superior in prowess and in deeds of war, and in the days of Joash ben-Jehoahaz ben-Jehu had barely conceded to Judah a right to separate existence. More than all this, the apostasies of Judah, from the days of Solomon downwards, were quite as heinous as Jezebel's Baal-worship, and far more deadly than the irregular but not at first idolatrous cultus of Bethel.

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 13, "by all the prophets, and all the *seers*" (*chôzeh*). Hävernick thinks that the *nebi'im* were such *officially*.

The prophets are careful to teach Judah that if she was spared it was not because of any good deservings.[1] Yet now the cedar was scathed and smitten down, and its boughs were rent and scattered; and the thistle had escaped the wild beast's tread!

In the former volume we glanced at some of the causes of this, and the blessings which resulted from it. The central and chiefest blessing was, first, the preservation of a purer form of monotheism, and a loftier ideal of religion—though only realised by a few in Judah—than had ever prevailed in the Northern Tribes; secondly, and above all, the development of that inspiring Messianic prophecy which was to be fulfilled seven centuries later, when He who was David's Son and David's Lord came to our lost race from the bosom of the Father, and brought life and immortality to light.

And it was the work purely of "God's unseen providence, by men nicknamed 'Chance,'" which, dealing with nations as the potter with his clay, chooses some to honour and some to dishonour. For, as all the prophets are anxious to remind the Judæan Kingdom, their success, the procrastination of their downfall, their restoration from captivity, were not due to any merits of their own. The Jews were and ever had been a stiff-necked nation; and though some of their kings had been faithful servants of Jehovah, yet many of them —like Rehoboam, and Ahaz, and Manasseh—exceeded in wickedness and inexcusable apostasy the least faithful of the worshippers at Gilgal and Bethel. They were plainly reminded of their nothingness: "And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God,

[1] See Amos ii. 4, 5; Isa. xxviii. 15; Jer. xvi. 19, 20; Ezek. xx. 13-30, etc.

A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation."[1] "Fear not, thou worm Jacob: I will help thee."[2]

But this was the end of the Ten Tribes. Nor must we say that Hosea's prediction of mercy was laughed to scorn by the irony of events, when he had given it as God's promise that—

> "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger,
> I will not again destroy Israel;
> For I am God, and not man."[3]

The words mean that mercy is God's chiefest and most essential attribute; and, after all, a nation is composed of families and individuals, and in political extinction there may have been many families and individuals in Israel, like that of Tobias, and like that of Anna, the prophetess of the tribe of Asher, who found, either in their far exile, or among the scattered Jews who still peopled the old territories, a peace which was impossible during the distracted anarchy and deepening corruption of the whole period which had elapsed since the founding of the house of Omri. In any case God knows and loves His own. The words,

> "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger;
> For I am God, and not man,"

might stand for an epitome of much that is most precious in Holy Writ. God's orthodoxy is the truth; and the truth remaineth, though man's orthodoxy exercises all its fury and all its baseness to overwhelm it. What hope has any man, even a St. Paul—what hope had even the Lord Himself—before the harsh,

[1] Deut. xxvi. 5. [2] Isa. xli. 14. [3] Hos. xi. 9.

self-interested tribunals of human judgment, or of that purely external religionism which has always shown itself more brutal and more blundering than secular cruelty? What chance has there been, humanly speaking, for God's best saints, prophets, and reformers, when priests, popes, or inquisitors have been their judges? If God resembled those generations of unresisted ecclesiastics, whose chief resort has been the syllogism of violence, and whose main arguments have been the torture-chamber and the stake, what hope could there possibly be for the vast majority of mankind but those endless torments by the terrors of which corrupt Churches have forced their tyranny upon the crushed liberties and the paralysed conscience of mankind? The Indian sage was right who said that "God can only be truly described by the words No! No!"—that is, by repudiating multitudes of the ignoble and cruel basenesses which religious teachers have imagined or invented respecting Him. Because God is God, and not man—God, not a tyrant or an inquisitor—God, with the great compassionate heart of unfathomable tenderness,—therefore, in all who truly love Him, perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. Sin means ruin; yet God is love.[1]

The historian of the Kings here digresses, in a manner unusual to the Old Testament, to give us a most interesting glimpse of the fate of the conquered people, and the origin of the race which was known to after-ages by the name "Samaritan."

Sargon, when he had sacked the capital, carried out the policy of deportation which had now been estab-

[1] See my *Minor Prophets*, 6-97.

lished by the Assyrian kings. He achieved the double purpose of populating the capital and province of Nineveh, while he reduced subject nations to inanition, by sweeping away all the chief of the inhabitants from conquered states, and settling them in his own more immediate dominions. There they would be reduced to impotence, and mingle with the races among whom their lot would henceforth be cast. He therefore "carried Israel away" into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, north of Thapsacus, on the Euphrates, and in Habor, the river of Gozan[1]—*i.e.*, on the river in Northern Assyria which still bears the name of Khabour, and flows into the Euphrates—and in the cities of the Medes.[2] He replaced the old population by Dinaites, Tarpelites, Apharsathchites, Susanchites, Elamites, Dehavites, and Babylonians, after carrying away the great bulk of the better-class population.[3]

After this the historian pauses to sum up and emphasise once more the main lesson of his narrative. It is that "righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is the reproach of any people." God had called His son Israel out of Egypt, delivered His chosen from Pharaoh, given them a pleasant land; but "Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen." They had failed therefore in fulfilling the very purpose

[1] Not as in A.V., "Habor, *by* the river of Gozan."

[2] 2 Kings xvii. 6. The LXX. has "rivers" and "mountains": *ἐν Ἀλαὲ καὶ ἐν Ἀβὼρ ποταμοῖς Γωζὰν καὶ ὄρη Μήδων.* The river is not Ezekiel's Chebar. These deportations *en masse* of a whole population, with their women and children, their waggons and flocks, are depicted on Sargon's series of tablets in his splendid palace at Khorsabad.

[3] Ezra iv. 10. "The great and noble Asnapper" of the passage is either some Assyrian general, or a confusion of the name Assurbanipal.

for which they had been set apart. They had been intended "to uplift among the nations the banner of righteousness" and the banner of the One True God. Instead of this, they were seduced by the heathen ritual of

"Gay religions full of pomp and gold."

They decked out alien institutions,[1] and alike in frequented and populous places—"from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city"—set up *matstseboth* (A.V., "pillars") and *Asherim* on every high hill. The green trees became *obumbratrices scelerum*, the secret bowers of their iniquities. They burnt incense on the *bamoth*, and served idols, and wrought wickedness. Useless had been the voices of all the prophets and the seers. They went after vain things, and became vain. Beginning with the two "calves," they proceeded to lewd and orgiastic idolatries. Ahab and Jezebel seduced them into Tyrian Baal-worship. From the Assyrians they learnt and practised the adoration of the host of heaven.[2] From Moab and Ammon they borrowed the abominable rites of Moloch, and used divination and enchantments by means of belomancy (Ezek. xxi. 21, 22) and necromancy, and sold themselves to do wickedness.

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[1] 2 Kings xvii. 9. Heb., "covered"; A.V. and R.V., "did secretly," rather "perfidiously"; LXX., *ἡμφιέσαντο λόγους ἀδίκους κατὰ κύριον*; Vulg., *Et offenderunt verbis non rectis dominum suum.*

[2] Star-worship is not mentioned in the Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx.–xxiii.) or the oldest sections of the Mosaic Law. It is first forbidden in Deut. iv. 19, xvii. 3, when contact with Syrians and Assyrians made it known (comp. Job xxxi. 26–28; Jer. viii. 2, xix. 13; Zeph. i. 5). The language of 2 Kings vii.–xxiii. frequently reflects the prohibitions of Deuteronomy (see Deut. xii. 2, 30, 31, iv. 19, v. 7, 8, xvi. 21, xviii. 10, xxxi. 16, etc.

Nor was this all. These idolatries, with their guilty ritualism, were not confined to Israel, but also

> "Infected Zion's daughters with like heat,
> Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
> Ezekiel saw, when, by the vision led,
> His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
> Of alienated Judah."

And thus, when Jehovah afflicted the seed of Israel and cast them out of His sight, Judah also had to feel the stroke of retribution.[1]

And it is idle to object that even if Israel had been faithful she must have inevitably perished before the superior might of Damascus, or Nineveh, or Babylon. How can we tell? It is not possible for us thus to write unwritten history, and there is absolutely nothing to show that the surmise is correct. In the days of David, of Uzziah, of Jeroboam II., Judah and Israel had shown what they could achieve. Had they been strong in faithfulness to Jehovah, and in the righteousness which that faith required, they would have shown an invincible strength amid the moral enervation of the surrounding people. They might have held their own by welding into one strong kingdom the whole of Palestine, including Philistia, Phœnicia, the Negeb, and the Trans-Jordanic region. They might have consolidated the sway which they at various times attained southwards, as far as the Red Sea port of Elath; northwards over Aram and Damascus, as far as the Hamath on the Orontes; eastwards to Thapsacus on the Euphrates; westward to the Isles of the Gentiles.

[1] In 2 Kings xvii. 11, for "they did wicked things," the LXX. has κοινωνοὺς (*i.e.*, *qedeshim*) ἐχάραξαν καὶ ἑταιρίδας (*qedeshôth*); *i.e.*, they had depraved *hieroduli* of both sexes. Comp. Hos. iv. 14; Gen. xxxviii. 21 (where the allusion is to one of the votaries of Asherah).

There is nothing improbable, still less impossible, in the view that, if the Israelites had truly served Jehovah and obeyed His laws, they might then have permanently established the monarchy which was ideally regarded as their inheritance, and which for brief and fitful periods they partially maintained. And such a monarchy, held together by warrior statesmen, strong and righteous, and above all secure in the blessing of God, would have been a thoroughly adequate counterpoise, not only to dilatory and distracted Egypt, which had long ceased to be aggressive, but even to brutal Assyria, which prevailed in no small measure because of the isolation and mutual dissension of these southern principalities.

But, as it was, "Assyria and Egypt—the two world-powers in the dawn of history, the two chief sources of ancient civilisation, the twin giant-empires which bounded the Israelite people on the right hand and on the left—were cruel neighbours, between whom the ill-fated nation was tossed to and fro in wanton sport like a shuttlecock. They were cruel friends before whom it must cringe in turns, praying sometimes for help, suing sometimes for very life—alternate scourges in the hand of the Divine wrath. Now it is the fly of Egypt, and now it is the bee of Assyria, whose ruthless swarms issue forth at the word of Jehovah, settling in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes, with deadly sting, fatal to man and beast, devastating the land far and wide. Holding the poor Israelite in their relentless embrace, they threatened ever and again to crush him by their grip. Like the fabled rocks which frowned over the narrow straits of the Bosporus, they would crash together and annihilate the helpless craft which the storms of

destiny had placed at their mercy. Israel reeled under their successive blows. As was the beginning, so was the end. As the captivity of Egypt had been the cradle of the nation, so was the captivity of Assyria to be its tomb."[1]

In any case the principle of the historian remains unshaken. Sin is weakness; idolatry is folly and rebellion; uncleanness is decrepitude. St. Paul was not thinking of this ancient Philosophy of History when he wrote his Epistle to the Romans; yet the intense and masterly sketch which he gives of that moral corruption which brought about the long, slow, agonising dissolution of the beauty that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome, is one of its strongest justifications. His view only differs from the summary before us in the power of its eloquence and the profoundness of its psychologic insight. He says the same thing as the historian of the Kings, only in words of greater power and wider reach, when he writes: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings" (ἐματαιώθησαν, the very word used in the LXX. in 2 Kings xvii. 15), "and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (words which might describe the expediency-policy of Jeroboam I., and its fatal consequences), "and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. For this cause God gave them up to passions of dishonour, and unto

[1] Bishop Lightfoot, *Sermons*, p. 267.

a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity,"—and so on, through a long catalogue of iniquities which are identical with those which we find so burningly denounced on the pages of the prophets of Israel and Judah.

Even a Machiavelli, cool and cynical and audacious as was his scepticism, could see and admit that faithfulness to religion is the secret of the happiness and prosperity of states.[1] An irreligious society tends inevitably and always to be a dissolute society; and a "dissolute society is the most tragic spectacle which history has ever to present—a nest of disease, of jealousy, of dissensions, of ruin, and despair, whose last hope is to be washed off the world and disappear. Such societies must die sooner or later of their own gangrene, of their own corruption, because the infection of evil, spreading into unbounded selfishness, ever intensifying and reproducing passions which defeat their own aim, can never end in anything but moral dissolution." We need not look further than the collapse of France after the battle of Sedan, and the cause to which that collapse was attributed, not only by Christians, but by her own most worldly and sceptical writers, to see that the same causes ever issue and will issue in the same ruinous effects.

In order to complete the history of the Northern Kingdom, the historian here anticipates the order of time

[1] "La quale Religione se ne Principi della Republica Christiana si fusse mantenuta, secondo che dal dottore d'essa ne fu ordinato, sarebbero gli State e le Republiche Christiane più unite e più felici assai ch' elle non sono" (*Discorsi*, i. 12).

by telling us what happened to the mongrel population whom Sargon transplanted into central Ephraim in place of the old inhabitants.

The king, we are told, brought them from Babylon —which was at this time under the rule of Assyria; from Cuthah—by which seems to be meant some part of Mesopotamia near Babylon;[1] from Avva, or Ivah—probably the same as Ahavah or Hit, on the Euphrates, north-west of Babylon; from Sepharvaim, or Sippara, also on the Euphrates;[2] and from Hamath, on the Orontes, which had not long remained under Jeroboam II.[3] It must not be supposed that the whole population of Ephraim was deported; that was a physical impossibility. Although we are told in Assyrian annals that Sargon carried away with him so vast a number of captives, it is, of course, clear that the lowest and poorest part of the population was left.[4] We can imagine the wild confusion which arose when they found themselves compelled to share the dismantled palaces and abandoned estates of the wealthy with the horde of new colonists, whose language, in all probability, they but imperfectly understood. There must have been many a tumult, many a scene of horror, such as took place in the long antagonism of Normans

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 24. Comp. xviii. 34. Hence the later Jews comprehensively called the Samaritans Cuthites. Comp. 2 Kings xix. 13 Isa. xxxvii. 13.

[2] Heliopolis, Ptolemy, v. 18, § 7; Isa. xxxvi. 19. Here, according to the Chaldæan legends, Xisuthrus buried his tablets about the Creation, etc.

[3] From Ezra iv. 2 some infer that the main immigrants were introduced by Esarhaddon, who did not succeed till B.C. 681. He claims to have colonised Syria.

[4] So we see from 2 Kings xix. 13, which applies to the reign of Hezekiah.

and Saxons in England, before the immigrants and the relics of the former populace settled down to amalgamation and mutual tolerance.

Sargon is said to have carried away with him the golden calf or calves of Bethel, as Tiglath-Pileser is said by the Rabbis to have carried away that of Dan.[1] He also took away with him all the educated classes, and all the teachers of religion.[2] No one was left to instruct the ignorant inhabitants; and, as Hosea had prophesied, there was neither a sacrifice, nor a pillar, nor an ephod, and not even teraphim to which they could resort.[3] Naturally enough, the disunited dregs of an old and of a new population had no clear knowledge of religion. They "feared not Jehovah." The sparseness of inhabitants, with its consequent neglect of agriculture, caused the increase of wild beasts among them. There had always been lions and bears in "the swellings of Jordan,"[4] and in all the lonelier parts of the land; and to this day there are leopards in the woods of Carmel, and hyænas and jackals in many regions. Conscious of their miserable and godless condition, and afflicted by the lions, which they regarded as a sign of Jehovah's anger, the Ephraimites sent a message to the King of Assyria. They only claimed Jehovah as their local god, and complained that the new colonists had provoked the wrath of "the God of the land" by not knowing His "manner"—that

[1] See Appendix, "The Golden Calves."

[2] He uses the agency of "the great and noble Asnapper" (Ezra iv. 10) for the deportation (see Botta, 145; Layard, *Nin. and Bab.*, i. 148; Dr. Hincks, *Jour. of Sacr. Lit.*, October 1858), unless Asnapper be a confusion for Assurbanipal (Sardanapalus).

[3] Hos. iii. 4.

[4] See Jer. xlix. 19, l. 44; Prov. xxii. 13, etc.

is, the way in which He should be worshipped. The consequence was that they were in danger of being exterminated by lions. The kings of Assyria were devoted worshippers of Assur and Merodach, but they held the common belief of ancient polytheists that each country had its own potent divinities. Sargon, therefore, gave orders that one of the priests of his captivity should be sent back to Samaria, "to teach them the manner of the god of the land." The priest selected for the purpose returned, took up his residence at the old shrine of Bethel, and "taught them how they should fear Jehovah." His success was, however, extremely limited, except among the former followers of Jeroboam's dishonoured cult. The old religious shrines still continued, and the immigrants used them for the glorification of their former deities. Samaria, therefore, witnessed the establishment of a singularly hybrid form of religionism. The Babylonians worshipped Succoth-Benoth,[1] perhaps Zirbanit, wife of Merodach or Bel; the Cuthites worshipped Nergal, the Assyrian war-god, the lion-god;[2] the Hittites, from Hamath, worshipped Ashima or Esmûn, the god of air and thunder, under the form of a goat;[3] the Avites preferred Nibhaz and Tartak, perhaps Saturn—unless these names be Jewish jeers, implying that one of these

[1] Lit., "Daughter-huts" (Selden, *De Dis Syr.*, ii. 7), but probably a transliteration. Zarpanit—"She who gives seed"—was Aphrodite Pandemos (Mylitta—Herod., i. 199). The Rabbis—who only guess—say she represented "the Clucking Hen"—*i.e.*, the Pleiades. There does not seem to be any connection between Succoth and "Sakkuth," the various reading in Amos v. 26, which seems to be the Assyrian Moloch.

[2] Said to be worshipped under the form of a cock.

[3] LXX., Ἐβλαζέρ. Jarchi says these deities were worshipped under base animal forms—but it is more than doubtful.

deities had the head of a dog, and the other of an ass.[1] More dreadful, if less ridiculous, was the worship of the Sepharvites, who adored Adrammelech and Anammelech, the sun-god under male and female forms, to whom, as to Moloch, they burnt their children in the fire. As for ministers, "they made unto them priests from among themselves,[2] who offered sacrifices for them in the shrines of the bamoth." Thus the whole mongrel population "feared the Lord, and served their own gods," as they continued to do in the days of the annalist whose record the historian quotes. He ends his interesting sketch with the words, that, in spite of the Divine teaching, "these nations"—so he calls them, and so completely does he refuse to them the dignity of being Israel's children—feared the Lord, and served their graven images, their children likewise, and their children's children,—"as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."[3]

The "unto this day" refers, no doubt, to the document from which the historian of the Kings was quoting —perhaps about B.C. 560, in the third generation after the fall of Samaria. A very brief glance will suffice to indicate the future history of the Samaritans. We hear but little of them between the present reference and the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. By that time they had purged themselves of these grosser idolatries, and held themselves fit in all respects to co-operate with

[1] The Rabbis, from Exod. xxiii. 13; Josh. xxiii. 7, thought they were bound to give scornful nicknames to heathen deities. Hence such changes as Kir-Heres for Kir-Cheres, Beelzebub for Beelzebul, Bethaven for Bethel, Bosheth for Baal, etc.

[2] Not as in A.V., "of the lowest of them," but "of all classes." Comp. 1 Kings xii. 31.

[3] In 2 Kings xvii. 31–38 we again find repeated references to Deuteronomy (iv. 23, v. 32, x. 20, etc.).

the returned exiles in the work of building the Temple. Such was not the opinion of the Jews. Ezra regarded them as "the adversaries of Judah and Israel."[1] The exiles rejected their overtures. In B.C. 409 Manasseh, a grandson of the high priest expelled by Nehemiah for an unlawful marriage with a daughter of Sanballat, of the Samaritan city of Beth-horon, built the schismatic temple on Mount Gerizim.[2] The relations of the Samaritans to the Jews became thenceforth deadly. In B.C. 175 they seconded the profane attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to paganise the Jews, and in B.C. 130 John Hyrcanus, the Maccabee, destroyed their temple. They were accused of waylaying Jews on their way to the Feasts, and of polluting the Temple with dead bones.[3] They claimed Jewish descent (John iv. 12), but our Lord called them "aliens" (ἀλλογενής, Luke xvii. 18), and Josephus describes them as "residents from other nations" (μέτοικοι, ἀλλοεθνεῖς). They are now a rapidly dwindling community of fewer than a hundred souls—"the oldest and smallest sect in the world"—equally despised by Jews and Mohammedans. The Jews, as in the days of Christ, have no dealings with them. When Dr. Frankl, on his philanthropic visit to the Jews of the East, went to see their celebrated Pentateuch, and mentioned the fact to a Jewish lady—"What!" she exclaimed: "have you been among the worshippers of the pigeon? Take a

[1] Ezra iv. 1. The actual word "Samaritans" occurs only once in the Old Testament, in 2 Kings xvii. 29.

[2] See Neh. xiii. 4–9, 28, 29; Jos., *Antt.*, XI. vii. 2. Josephus makes Manasseh a brother of the high priest Jaddua (B.C. 333).

[3] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. xiv. 3, XII. v. 5, XIII. ix. 1, XX. vi., XVIII. ii. 2. The bitterly hostile relations between Jews and Samaritans in the time of Christ are illustrated by Luke ix. 52–54.

purifying bath!" Regarding Gerizim as the place which God had chosen (John iv. 20), they alone can keep up the old tradition of the *sacrificial* passover. For long centuries, since the Fall of Jerusalem, it is only on Gerizim that the Paschal lambs and kids have been actually slain and eaten, as they are to this day, and will be, till, not long hence, the whole tribe disappears.

CHAPTER XXII

THE REIGN OF AHAZ

B.C. 735—715

2 KINGS xvi. 1—20

"Rimmon, whose delightful seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.
He also against the House of God was bold:
A leper once he lost, and gained a king—
Ahaz, his sottish conqueror, whom he drew
God's altar to disparage and displace
For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
His odious offerings, and adore the gods
Whom he had vanquished."

Paradise Lost, i. 467—476.

ACCORDING to our authorities, Ahaz ("Possessor")[1] began his reign of sixteen years at the age of twenty. Of the exactitude of these references we cannot be certain, because they also state (2 Kings xviii. 2) that Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and this reduces us to the absurdity of supposing that Hezekiah was born when his father was only eleven years old.[2] We might infer from Isa. iii. 4 that Ahaz was not so old as twenty when he

[1] Probably a shortened form for Jehoahaz ("The Lord taketh hold"). He is called Jahuhazi in Tiglath-Pileser's inscription (Schrader, *Keilinschr.*, p. 163).

[2] For twenty-five it is not improbable that we should read fifteen.

succeeded Jotham; for there—in a terrible prophecy which can only refer to the beginning of this reign—we read, "And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them"; or, as it should be perhaps rendered, "And with childishness, or wilfulness, shall they rule over them."

Whatever may have been the king's age, surely never king succeeded to a more distracted kingdom, or reigned over a more terrified people! If he could have had any choice in the matter, he might well have declined the fearful burden. Describing the state of things, the great prophet Isaiah, who now began his career, exclaims,—

"For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the elder; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning charmer, and the skilful enchanter. And the people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the elder, and the base against the honourable. Then a man shall take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, 'Thou hast clothing, be *thou our judge, and let this ruin be under thy hand*': in that day shall he lift his voice, saying, 'I will not be a builder-up; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: ye shall not make me a ruler of the people.' For Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen. The show of their countenance is against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not. As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them."[1]

[1] Isa. iii. 1-12.

This is a frightful picture of famine—the dearth of intellect, the dearth of statesmen, of all genius, of all insight. It describes the prevalence of oppression and of ghastly destitution, accompanied by such utter despair that no one cared to exert himself for the arrest of the ruin which seemed imminent over that which was already no better than itself a ruin.

The Book of Isaiah is arranged in a most confused and unchronological manner, and it is probable that the first five chapters should be placed after the sixth, which describes the prophet's call in the year that King Uzziah died. They paint a picture of moral collapse. His first chapter is called by Ewald "the great arraignment," and by its references describes the awful period of alarm during the war of Syria and Ephraim against Judah. It might seem as if the combined host was even then in the country, or had only just retired from it; for we read,—

"Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a wilderness, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

But even in the midst of this afflictive dispensation there were no signs of repentance. The children of Israel were rebels who despised the Holy One of Israel,—"Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly!" (i. 7–9). They had all the externals of religion: they offered vain sacrifices, and kept a multitude of idle feasts, and offered many formal prayers; but all this was but a cumbrance to Him who desired clean hands and a pure heart as conditions of forgiveness (10–20). What hope could there be for a city of murderers, who

loved bribes and perverted judgment (21–24)? The land was full of pride, full of idols, full of the luxury of the rich amid the starvation of the poor (ii. 1–22).[1] Women partook of the general corruption. They walked mincingly with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes,[2] thinking of nothing but their anklets, and crescents, and bracelets, and mufflers, ear-drops, head-tires, perfumes, mirrors, armlets, and nose-jewels: therefore they should have sackcloth for stomachers, ropes for girdles, and burning instead of beauty, and only a remnant should escape (iii. 16–iv. 1). Judah was like a vineyard,—rich in advantages, blessed with fondest care; but when God looked for grapes, it only brought forth wild grapes—a semblance, but only a poisoned semblance, of the true vintage: therefore it should be left neglected and rainless. Woe to the greedy land-grabbing, and drunkenness, and revelry of the rich! Woe to their mockery of God and their devotion to vanity! Woe to their insane pride and wanton injustice! Could they escape vengeance? No! Jehovah had looked for judgment (*mishpat*), but behold oppression (*mishpach*); for righteousness (*tse'dakah*), but behold a cry (*tse'akah*) (v. 1–24).[3] They might escape—they would escape—the Syrian and the Ephraimite; but behind these lay a more terrrible and

[1] In Isa. ii. 2–4 we find, as so often in the prophetic books in their present too-often-haphazard arrangement, a glowing promise of universal peace placed before unsparing denuciations. The verses are also found in Micah (iv. 1, 2), and it has been conjectured that in both prophets they are a quotation from some older source—perhaps from Jonah, son of Amittai.

[2] Heb., "deceiving with their eyes."

[3] Isa. v. 7. The paronomasia of the original is striking. Van Oort renders it, "He looked for *reason*, but behold *treason*; and for *right*, but behold *affright*."

a more portentous foe, even the Assyrian, the scourge of God's wrath (25–30).

"It was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim." Is it strange that in such a condition of things the heart of Ahaz and of his people "was moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind"?

Such was the terrible crisis at which Isaiah began his ministry. He was the son of Amoz,[1] who has been (much too precariously) identified with a brother of Amaziah. It is probable that he was a man of distinguished, if not of princely, birth, and he exercised a more powerful influence over the politics of his country than any other prophet—not even excepting Jeremiah.

[1] His name means "Jehovah saves," and is perhaps alluded to in Isa. viii. 18. Amos ("One who bears a burden"), needless to say, is a totally different name from that of Amoz ("Vigorous"), the father of Isaiah.

CHAPTER XXIII

ISAIAH AND AHAZ

2 KINGS xvi

"Expediency is man's wisdom; doing right is God's."
GEORGE MEREDITH.

ISAIAH was one of those men whom God provides for the need of kingdoms. He was not only a prophet, but a statesman, a reformer, a poet, a man of invincible faith and unequalled insight. If Ahaz had accepted his counsels and followed his moral guidance, the whole history of Judah might have been different.

But the position of things was indeed disastrous. Judah was attacked from every side. On the south-east the Edomites renewed their devastating raids, and swept off multitudes of captives, who were sold as slaves in the Western slave-markets. On the south-west the Philistines once more rose in revolt, and acquired permanent repossession of many parts of the Shephelah, mastering Beth-Shemesh, Ajalon, Gederoth. Shocho, Timnath, Gimzo, and all the adjacent districts, But this was nothing compared with the humiliation and destruction inflicted by Rezin and Pekah. They shut up Ahaz in Jerusalem; and though they could not storm its almost impregnable defences, which had recently been fortified by Uzziah and Jotham, they were undisputed masters of the rest of the land, so

that Judah was "brought low and made naked."[1] Rezin, indeed, weary of a tedious siege, swept southwards to Elath, on the gulf of Akabah, seized it, and peopled it with an Edomite garrison, thereby destroying the commerce in which Solomon and Jehoshaphat had taken pride, and which Uzziah had recently re-established. Having thus left an effectual annoyance to Judah in his rear, he gave up the design of dethroning Ahaz and substituting in his place "*the son of Tabeal*," who would have been a tool in the hands of the confederate kings. He seized, however, a multitude of captives, and with them and with much booty he returned to Damascus. "The son of Tabeal"—a name which occurs nowhere else— has been found very puzzling.[2] I believe it to be simply an instance of the Rabbinic process of transposition, called *Themourah*. Some identify it with Itibi'alu of an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser. Others suppose that he was a Syrian, and that Tabeal stands for Tabrimnon. But by the application of Themourah (called the *Albam*) Tabeal simply gives us "Remaliah," and is either a scornful variation of the name of Pekah's father, or has arisen from the watchword of a secret conspiracy. Since in the text of Jeremiah (li. 41, xxv. 26) (by *Atbash*, another form of the secret transposition of letters of which the generic name was *Gematria*) we read *Sheshach* for Babel, the name Tabeal may have been dealt with in a similar method.[3] Pekah, according to the Chronicler, inflicted far deadlier injuries than Rezin. In one day he slew one hundred and twenty thousand "sons

[1] 2 Chron. xxviii. 19.

[2] It may mean "God is good" (Tabeel).

[3] For further explanations I must refer to my paper on Rabbinic Exegesis (*Expositor*, First Series, v. 373).

of valour," because they had forsaken Jehovah, God of their fathers. His general Zichri, a mighty Ephraimite, slew Maaseiah, the king's son;[1] and Azrikam, the chancellor; and Elkanah, "the second to the king." The army carried away two hundred thousand captives and much spoil to Samaria. But on their arrival, a prophet named Oded[2] reproved the Israelites for having massacred the Judæans "in a rage that reacheth to heaven." Aided by various princes, he succeeded in inducing the people to refuse to harbour the captives, and clothed, fed, and sent them back unharmed to Jericho, mounting the feeble on horses and asses. The story bears on the face of it the signs of enormous exaggeration.

In the crisis of their miseries, but just before the siege, Ahaz had gone outside the city walls "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the causeway of the fuller's field," probably to look after the water-supply, which had always been a difficulty for Jerusalem, and on which depended her capacity to withstand a siege. Here he was met by the prophet Isaiah, who was leading by the hand the little son to whom he had given the name of "Shear-jashub" ("A remnant shall return"),[3] as a witness to the truth of the prophecy which he had heard on the occasion of his call,—

"And if there should yet be a tenth in it, this shall be again consumed; yet as the terebinth and the oak, though cut down, have their stock remaining, even so a sacred seed shall be the stock thereof."[4]

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[1] 2 Chron. xxviii. 7.

[2] Of Oded nothing else is known.

[3] Some, however, interpret the name "A remnant repents" (LXX., ὁ καταλειφθεὶς Ἰασούβ; Vulg., *Qui derelictus est Jaseb*).

[4] Isa. vi. 13.

The object of the prophet was to cheer up the fainting heart of the king, and to say to him first,—

"Take heed, and be quiet."

This mandate probably refers to rumours—which Isaiah must have heard—of the king's intention to follow the counsels of the party which urged him to seek foreign assistance. One of these parties advised him to throw himself into the arms of Egypt, and rely on her protection; the other gave the more perilous counsel of invoking the aid of Assyria. Isaiah's mandate to the king and to the nation was to take neither step, but to trust in the Lord, and to repent of individual and national misdoing. He summed up his message in the rule,—

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

The advice was emphasised by a promise of the most decisive and encouraging kind. When all looked so helpless, the prophet was bidden to say,—

"Fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for these two stumps of smoking torches, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of Remaliah's son. They have taken evil counsel against thee. But thus saith the Lord God, 'It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is only Rezin, and the head of Samaria is a mere Remaliah's son.'"[1]

And then, to confirm the lesson of confidence in God, the brief assurance,—

[1] The words "And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people" (Isa. vii. 8), are almost certainly an interpolation: for (1) the overthrow came within far less than sixty years; (2) the clause awkwardly breaks the context; (3) the "sixty years" is inconsistent with the promise (vii. 16) that it should be within very few years.

"If ye will not confide,
Surely ye shall not abide."

Convinced of the certainty of this immediate deliverance, Isaiah bade the king to ask for a sign from Jehovah, either in the height above, or in the depth beneath.

But the timid and hypocritical king was not so to be influenced. He had on his side "the scornful men, who ruled Judah"; the mocking priests, who sneered and jeered at Isaiah's teaching as repetitive and commonplace, and only fit for children; and the princes and nobles, who formed the Court party, headed by Shebna the scribe. He probably looked on Isaiah as a mere unpractical faddist, an excited fanatic—all very well as a prophet, but not a man who ought to thrust himself into the plans of politicians. Ahaz had his own plans, and he had not the smallest intention of altering them in consequence of anything which Isaiah might say. He was far too timid and unfaithful to rely on anything so vague as Divine assurance. He was convinced that his only chance lay in the horses of Egypt or the fierce infantry of Assyria. So he said with sham piety, merely intended to put the prophet off, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah."

That moment marks what may be called the birth-throe of Messianic prophecy in its most specific character. For then the prophet, after reproving the king for wearying Jehovah as well as His servants, adds, in words of far wider and deeper significance than their immediate bearing, that Jehovah Himself should give a sign; for the maiden should conceive and bear a Son, and call His name Immanuel ("God with us"). The child should grow up in a time of scarcity; for owing to the devastation of the land, he would only be able to be nurtured on curdled milk and honey. But

before he had reached years of discretion—before he had arrived at the power of moral choice—the land whose two kings Ahaz abhorred should be a desert. Yet let not Ahaz exult too much in the immediate deliverance! Days of unexampled misery were at hand. Jehovah should hiss for the fly from the farthest canals of Egypt, and for the bee of Assyria, and they should settle in swarms in the valleys and pastures. Ahaz—he had not alluded to the design, but Isaiah knew it well—was about to hire a razor from beyond the Euphrates, but that razor should sweep away the hair and beard of Judah. Agriculture should languish, and the people should only be able to live in privation on whey and honey; and the vineyards should be full of briers and thorns, and should be mere places for hunting.[1]

This event, therefore, as Caspari says, stands at the turning-point of Old Testament History. It marks the beginning of that second period of the History of the Chosen People in which their hopes were granted as a counterpoise to their anguish and their humiliation. "It stood, therefore, at the point where a prospect offered itself to the eye of the prophet which reached out over the whole development of the people of God."

To all such prophecies Ahaz was utterly deaf: they did not for a moment induce him to swerve from his purpose. But to call still further attention to his promise as the Syrian Ephraimitish host pressed forward, Isaiah took a great piece of vellum, and inscribed on it, in the ordinary characters,—

"SPEED-PLUNDER-HASTE-SPOIL."

He put it up in some conspicuous place, before his own house or in the Temple, and took the priest Urijah and

[1] Isa. vii. 1–25.

Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah, into his confidence as faithful witnesses. He told them the explanation of his sign, and they would satisfy the curiosity of the people on the subject. It meant that in nine months' time his wife should bear a son, and that he and his wife, the prophetess, would call the boy's name "Speed-plunder-haste-spoil," as a sign that before the child was able to say "Father" or "Mother" Rezin and Pekah should be extinguished. For the Assyrian should speed to the plunder and haste to the spoil, and the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria should be carried away by the King of Assyria. Since Judah despised "the soft flowing waters of Shiloah,"[1] and preferred Rezin and Pekah,[2] they should be deluged by the Euphrates of Assyria, and Assyria's outspread wings should overshadow thy land, O Immanuel (viii. 1–8). How vain, then, of the people to try and meet the confederacy of Syria and Ephraim by new confederacy of Judah with Assyria! This, after all, is Immanuel's land. God is with us. We have but to fear God, we have but to be faithful to duty, and Jehovah shall be our sanctuary, though He be a stumbling-block to many in Israel, and a snare to many in Jerusalem.[3] This is God's teaching and God's testimony, and Isaiah and his children are signs of it. For does not Isaiah mean "Salvation of Jehovah"; and Shear-jashub, "A remnant shall return"; and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "Swift-spoil-speedy-prey"; and Immanuel,

[1] Not improbably the water which afterwards flowed through Hezekiah's new tunnel between the Virgin's Tomb and the Pool of Siloam. It is referred to in 2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 30 (Isa. xxii. 9–11). See Appendix II.

[2] This, if it be correct, can only mean that the son of Tabeal had a party in Jerusalem; but Hitzig renders it "*dreadeth*," not "rejoiceth in."

[3] The meaning is by no means clear.

"God is with us"? What need, then, to seek wizards and necromancers? Seek God; confide, abide![1] Trouble and darkness there should be; but all was not utterly hopeless. Northern Israel had been bedimmed and afflicted; but soon they should be exalted, and see light, and their yoke be broken as in the day of Midian, and the trampling boot and blood-stained mantle of the warrior shall be burned in the fire: for a Child is born, a Son is given unto us of David's line, who shall be a Mighty Deliverer, a Prince of Peace,—and Israel shall perish.

[1] See Driver, *Isaiah*, p. 34.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE APOSTASIES OF AHAZ

2 KINGS xvi. 1—18

"For when we in our wickedness grow hard,
Oh misery on't! the wise gods seal our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
Adore our errors; laugh at us while we strut
To our confusion."

AHAZ was indifferent to these prophecies because his heart was otherwhere. It is clear from our authorities that this king had excited an unusually deep antipathy in the hearts of those later writers who judged religion not only from the earlier standpoint, but from the stern and inexorable requirements of the Deuteronomic and the Priestly Codes. The historian, adopting an unusual phrase, says that "he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel." He not only continued the high places, as the best of his predecessors had done, but he increased their popularity and importance by personally offering sacrifices and burning incense "on the hills and under every green tree." It is probable, too, that he introduced into Judah horses and chariots dedicated to the sun.[1] "He made

[1] See 2 Kings xxiii. 11, which shows that this was not an innovation of Manasseh's. They were common in Persia. See Q. Curtius, iii. 3.

molten images for the Baalim," says the Chronicler, "and burnt incense in the valley of the son of Himmon."

This last was his crowning atrocity: he actually sanctioned the revolting worship of the abomination of the children of Ammon, which Solomon had tolerated on the mount of offence. "He made his son to pass through the fire." The Chronicler expresses it still more dreadfully by saying that "he *burnt his children* in the fire."[1]

In the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, or of the Beni-Hinnom, of which the name is perpetuated in Gehenna, the place of torture for lost souls, there stood a frightful image of the king—Moloch, Melek, Malcham. It represented the sun-god, worshipped, not only as Baal under the emblems of prolific nature, but, like the Egyptian Typhon, as the emblem of the sun's scorching and blighting force. It was perhaps a human figure with the head of an ox. The arms of the brazen image sloped downwards over a cistern, which was filled with fuel; and when a human sacrifice was to be offered to him, the child was probably first killed, and then placed on these brazen arms as a gift to the idol. It rolled down into the flaming tank, and was consumed amid the strains of music. Recourse was only had to the

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 31; Ezek. xvi. 21, xxiii. 37, xxxiii. 6; Deut. xii. 31; Jer. xix. 5. See 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; for "his son," בְּנוֹ, it uses בָּנָיו "his sons," but perhaps generically. Moloch-worship may have been stimulated by accounts of the Assyrian fire-god Adrammelech (Movers, *Phöniz.*, ii. 101). On this sacrifice of children to Moloch, which the Phœnicians referred back to the god El or Il, once King of Byblos, who in a crisis of danger sacrificed his eldest son Icond, see Plut., *De Superst.*, § 13; Diod. Sic., xx. 12–14; 2 Kings iii. 27, xvi. 3, xxi. 6; Mic. vi. 7; Döllinger, *Judenthum u. Heidenthum* (E. T.), i. 427–429.

most frightful form of human sacrifice—the burning of grown-up victims—in extremities of disaster, as when Mesha of Moab offered up his eldest son to Chemosh on the wall of Kir-Hareseth in the sight of his people and of the three invading armies. But the sacrifice of children was public, and perhaps annual. Hence Milton, following the learned researches of Selden in his Syntagma *De Dis Syriis*, writes:—

> "First, Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
> Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears;
> Though, for the noise of drums and timbrels loud,
> Their children's cries unheard that pass'd through fire
> To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite
> Worshipp'd in Rabba and her watery plain,
> In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
> Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
> Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart
> Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
> His temple right against the Temple of God
> On that opprobrious hill, and made his grove
> The pleasant Valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
> And black Gehenna call'd, the type of hell."[1]

But it may be doubted whether Ahaz, in spite of his frightful position, or, in later days, the less excusable Manasseh, really destroyed the lives of their young sons.[2] The ancients had a notion that they could easily cheat their devil-deities. If a white ox of Clitumnus became unfitted for a victim to Jupiter of the Capitol by having on its body a few black spots, it

[1] This worship was to be punished by stoning (Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2-5; Deut. xviii. 10). On the whole subject see Movers, *Phönix.*, 64; Jarchi *on Jer. vii.* 31; Euseb., *Præp. Ev.*, iv. 16.

[2] Josephus says that Ahaz made "a whole burnt-offering" of his son; but his authority is very small (*καὶ ἴδιον ὡλοκαύτωσεν παῖδα*). Comp. Psalm cvi. 37.

was quite sufficient to make it pass with the *Di faciles* by chalking the black spots over it.[1] If human victims had to be thrown into the Tiber to Hercules, Numa taught the people that little wickerwork images (*scirpea*) would suit the purpose just as well.[2] Figures of dough were sometimes offered instead of human beings on the altar of Artemis of Tauris. Thus it became the custom, it is believed, merely to throw or to pass children through or over the flames, and conventionally to *regard them* as having been sacrificed, though they might escape the ordeal with little or no hurt. This was called *februatio*, or "lustration by fire."[3] We may hope that this device was adopted by the two Judæan kings, and, if so, they did not add to their horrible apostasy the crime of infanticide. If, however, Ahaz was even to the smallest extent implicated in such foul idolatries, it is not surprising that he was in no mood to listen to Isaiah. What is profoundly surprising, and is indeed a circumstance for which we cannot account, is that no word of fierce indignation was addressed to him on this account by Urijah, the high priest, whom Isaiah seems to describe as faithful, or by Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah, or by Micah, or by Isaiah, who feared man so little and God so much.

The Assyrian party at the Court of Ahaz prevailed over the Egyptian. Until the accession of the Ethiopian

[1] Ignorant Romanists have often cherished the same notions about the saints. For centuries in Spain the people bought the old gowns and cowls of the monks, and buried their dead in them, to deceive St. Peter into the notion that they were Dominicans or Franciscans!

[2] See Ovid, *Fasti*, v. 659: "Scripea pro domino Tiberi jactatur imago." They were also called *Argei*, *id.* 621; Varro, *L. L.*, vi. 3.

[3] Varro, *L. L.*, v. 3.

Sabaco[1] in 725, Egypt was indeed in so weak, harassed, and divided a condition under feeble native Pharaohs, that her help was obviously unavailable. The King of Judah, seeing no extrication from his calamities except in the way of worldly expediency, appealed to Tiglath-Pileser. In this he followed the precedent of his ancestor Asa, who had diverted the attack of Baasha by invoking the assistance of Syria. Ahaz sent to the Assyrian potentate the humble message, "I am thy servant and thy son: come up and save me from the Kings of Syria and Israel." If he had not faith to accept Isaiah's promises, what else could he do, when Syria, Israel, the Philistines, Edom, and Moab were all arrayed against him? The ambassadors probably made their way, not without peril, along the east of Jordan, or else by sea from Joppa, and so inland. Whether they took with them the enormous bribe without which the appeal of the helpless king might have been in vain, or whether this was sent subsequently under Assyrian escort, we do not know. It was euphemistically described as "a present" or "a blessing," but must be regarded either as a tribute or a bribe.

Tiglath-Pileser II. saw his opportunity, and at once invaded Damascus. In B.C. 733 he failed, but the next year he entirely subjugated the kingdom, and put an end to the dynasty. Rezin was probably put to death with the horrible barbarities which were normal among the brutal Ninevites; and as the Assyrians had no conception of colonisation or the wise government of dependencies, the Syrian popula-

[1] Herod., ii. 137. Egypt., *Sebek*; Heb., *So* (2 Kings xvii. 4), or perhaps *Seve*; Arab., *Shab'i*. Rawlinson, *Hist. of Anct. Egypt*, ii. 433-450.

tion was deported *en masse* to Elam and an unknown Kir.[1] For a time Damascus was made "a ruinous heap," and the cities of Aroer were the desolated lairs of pasturing flocks. Israel, as we have seen, was next overwhelmed by the same irremediable catastrophe, none of her people being left except such as might be compared to the mere gleanings of a vintage, and the few berries on the topmost boughs of the olive tree.[2]

Tiglath-Pileser meant to make Ahaz feel his yoke. He summoned him to do homage at Damascus, and there Ahaz once more displayed his cosmopolitan æstheticism at the expense of every pure tradition of the religion of his fathers.

His visit to Damascus was no doubt compulsory. His worldly policy, which looked so expedient, and which—apart from the defiance which it involved to the voice of God by His prophets—seemed to be so pardonable, had for the time succeeded. Isaiah's promises had been fulfilled to the letter. There was nothing more to fear either from Rezin or from Remaliah's son. Their kingdoms were a desolation. In his own annals Tiglath-Pileser[3] does not exaggerate his achievements.[4] He wrote as follows:—

"Rezin's warriors I captured, and with the sword I destroyed.
Of his charioteers and [his horsemen] the arms I broke:

[1] Kir (see Amos ix. 7) is omitted in the LXX. Elam is added in Isa. xxii. 6. Tiglath-Pileser calls the king Rasunnu Sarimirisu—*i.e.*, of Aram. See Smith, *Assyr. Discoveries*, p. 274; *Eponym Canon*, 68; Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 152 ff. [2] Isa. xvii. 1–11.

[3] The name seems to be Tuklat-abal-isarra,—according to Oppert worshipper of the son of the Zodiac—*i.e.*, of Nin or Hercules. According to Polyhistor, he was a usurper who had been a vine-dresser in the royal gardens. He never mentions his ancestry. But see Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 217 ff., 240 ff., and in Riehm.

[4] *Eponym Canon*, p. 121, lines 1–15. On this fall of Damascus and Samaria, see Isa. xvii

Their bow-bearing warriors, [their footmen] armed with spear and shield,
With my hand I captured them, and those that fought in their battle-line.
He to save his life fled away alone;
Like a deer [he ran], and entered into the great gate of his city.
His generals, whom I had taken alive, on crosses I hung;
His country I subdued;
Damascus, his city, I subdued, and like a caged bird I shut him in.
I cut down the unnumbered trees of his forest; I left not one.
Hadara, the palace of the father of Rezin of Syria, [I burnt].
The city of Samaria I besieged, I captured; eight hundred of its people and children I took;
Their oxen and their sheep I carried away.
I took five hundred and ninety-one cities;
Over sixteen districts of Syria like a flood I swept."

But the more complete destruction of Israel was due to Shalmaneser IV., who says,—

"The city of Samaria I besieged, I took,
I carried away twenty-seven thousand two hundred of its inhabitants;
I seized fifty of their chariots.
I gave up to plunder the rest of their possessions.
I appointed officers over them;
I laid on them the tribute of the former king.
In their place I settled the men of conquered countries."

The immediate service to Judah looked immense. The Assyrian might safely claim, and Ahaz might truthfully confess, that the intervention of Tiglath-Pileser had rescued him from the apparent imminence of destruction. But the Assyrian kings served no one for nothing. The price which had to be paid for Tiglath-Pileser's intervention was vassalage and tribute. Ahaz, or, as the Assyrians call him, Jehoahaz,[1] had

[1] Jahuhazi (Schrader, *Keilinschr.*, p. 263). He probably bore both names; but, as in the case of Jeconiah, who is called Coniah, the omission of the element "Jehovah" from his name may have been intended as a mark of reprobation.

styled himself Tiglath-Pileser's "servant and his son," and the Assyrian chose to have substantial proof of this parental suzerainty. The great king therefore summoned the poor subject-potentate to Damascus, where he was holding his victorious court.

So far Ahaz had no reason to complain of his "dreadful patron"; and if he had returned when he paid his homage, no immediate harm would have happened. But during his visit he saw "the altar" (*Heb.*) at the conquered city. Was it the altar of the defeated Syrian god Rimmon? or did the Assyrian persuade his willing vassal to sacrifice at the portable altar of his god Assur? We may, perhaps, infer the former from 2 Chron. xxviii. 23, where Ahaz says: "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." There is room to suspect some error here, because Rezin had fallen, and Damascus was in ruins, and Rimmon had conspicuously failed to help or to avenge his votaries.[1] Ahaz admired the altar, to whatever god it had been erected; and unmindful, or perhaps unconscious, that the altar of the Temple of Jerusalem was declared in the Pentateuch to have been divinely ordained—a fact to which the historian does not himself refer—he sent to the head priest Urijah a pattern of the altar which had struck his fancy at Damascus. The subservient priest, without a murmur or a remonstrance, undertook to have a similar altar ready for Ahaz in the Temple by the time of his return—a crime, if crime it were, which the Chronicler conceals. "Never

[1] The remark may refer to some earlier period in the reign of Ahaz, before the capture of Damascus. It is more probable that the altar was used for some Assyrian deity, and the adoption of it may have flattered Tiglath-Pileser.

any prince was so foully idolatrous," says Bishop Hall, "as that he wanted a priest to second him. A Urijah is fit to humour an Ahaz.[1] Greatness could never command anything which some servile wits were not ready both to applaud and justify." Certainly we should have hoped for more fidelity to ancient tradition from a man who earned the approving word of Isaiah; but it is only fair and just to admit that Urijah, in the universal ignorance which prevailed about the codes which were afterwards collected and published as the total legislation of the wilderness, may have viewed his obedience to the king's commands with very different eyes from those by which it was regarded in the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ. He may have been frankly unaware that he was guilty of an act which would afterwards be denounced as an apostatising enormity.[2]

When Ahaz returned, he was so much pleased with his new plaything that he at once acted as priest at his own new altar. Without the least opposition from

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 11, which records the zealous subservience of Urijah, is wanting in some MSS. of the LXX. But that the altar was made, and without his opposition, is clear from the narrative. Asa (2 Chron. xv. 8) had repaired Solomon's great altar; Hezekiah subsequently cleansed it (*id.* xxix. 18); Manasseh rebuilt it (*Q'rî*). The brass of it ultimately went to Babylon (Jer. lii. 17–20).

[2] Bähr says: "It seems that Urijah, like his companion, was only anxious for his revenues. At any rate, his conduct is a sign of the character and standing of the priests of that time. They were 'dumb dogs who could not bark.' They all followed their own ways, every one for his own gain" (Isa. lvi. 10, 11). "We have in this high priest," says the *Würtemberg Summary*, "a specimen of those hypocrites and belly-servants who say, 'Whose bread I eat, his song I sing'; who veer about with the wind, and seek to be pleasant to all men; who wish to hurt no one's feelings, but teach just what any one wants to hear."

the priests—who had so sternly resisted Uzziah—he offered burnt-offerings and meat-offerings and drink-offerings, and sprinkled the blood of peace-offerings on his altar.[1] Not content with this, he did not hesitate to order the removal of the huge brazen altar from the position, in front of the Temple porch, which it had held since the days of Solomon. He did this in order that his own favourite altar might be in the line of vision from the court, and not be overshadowed by the old one, which he shifted from the place of honour to the north side. He proceeded to call his own altar "the great altar," and ordered that the morning burnt-offering, and the evening *minchah*, and all the principal sacrifices should henceforth be offered upon it.[2] He did not wholly supersede the old brazen altar, which, he said, "shall be for me to inquire by," or, as the Hebrew may perhaps mean, "it should await"—*i.e.*, "I will hereafter consider what to do with it."

Ahaz is charged with the additional crime of removing the ornamental festoons of bronze pomegranates from the lavers, and the brazen oxen from under the molten sea, which henceforth lay dishonoured, without its proper and splendid supports, on the pavement of the

[1] 1 Kings viii. 64; 2 Chron. iv. 1. In this and similar instances commentators, biassed by *a priori* considerations, have imagined that Ahaz did not in person offer sacrifices. But this is what the text says, and it was the custom of kings to regard themselves as invested with Divine attributes. Ahaz may have had this lesson impressed on his mind by his visit to Tiglath-Pileser. See Grätz, *Gesch. der Juden.*, ii. 150. Layard, *Nin. and Bab.*, 472 ff., gives us pictures of Assyrian kings ministering at their altars, which are of various shapes.

[2] 2 Kings xvi. 15. Vulg., *paratum erit ad voluntatem meam.* The LXX. followed another reading: ἔσται μοι εἰς τὸ πρωί. Grätz (ii. 150), for לבקר, "to inquire," reads לקרב "to draw near to."

court.[1] He also took away the balustrade of the royal "ascent" from the palace to the Temple, and made a new entrance of a less gorgeous character than that which, in the days of Solomon, the Queen of Sheba had admired.[2]

No doubt these proceedings helped to heighten the unpopularity of Ahaz. But what could he do? He could, indeed, if he had had sufficient faith, have "trusted in Jehovah," as Isaiah bade him do. But he was under the terrific pressure of hostile circumstances, and, being a weak and timid man, felt himself unable to resist the influence of the haughty politicians and worldly priests by whom he was surrounded—men who openly made Isaiah their scoff. When he invited the interposition of Tiglath-Pileser,[3] all the other consequences of humiliation would naturally follow. He probably disliked as much as any one to see the great molten laver taken off the backs of the oxen which showed the skill of the ancient Hiram, and did not admire the despoiled aspect of the shrine of his capital. But if the King of Assyria or his emissaries had (as the historian implies) cast greedy eyes on these splendid objects of antiquity, the poor vassal could not refuse them. Better, he may have thought, that these material ornaments should go to Nineveh than that he should

[1] 1 Kings vii. 23-39.

[2] 2 Kings xvi. 18. The allusions are obscure. R.V., "the covered way"; A.V., "the covert for the Sabbath." See 2 Chron. ix. 4. Here the Hebr. *Q'ri* has *Mûsak*, and the Vulg. *Musach Sabbati*. The LXX. evidently did not understand it (*καὶ τὸν θεμέλιον τῆς καθέδρας ᾠκοδόμησεν*). For "covert for the Sabbath," Geiger suggests "molten images for the Shame" (Bosheth-Baal, by transposition of *Shabbath*). Comp. 2 Chron. xxviii. 2.

[3] 2 Chron. xxviii. 20: "Tiglath-Pileser came unto him, and distressed him, but helped him not."

be forced to exact yet heavier burdens from an impoverished people. His expedient is mentioned among his crimes, yet no one blamed the pious Hezekiah when, under similar circumstances, he acted in precisely the same manner.[1]

The Chronicler gives a darker aspect to his misdoings by saying that he cut to pieces the vessels of the house of God, and made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem, and *bamoth* to burn incense unto other gods in every several city of Judah. He says, further, that he closed the great gates of the Temple; put an end to the kindling of the lamps, the burning of incense, and the daily offerings; and left the whole Temple to fall into ruin and neglect.[2] We know no more of him. He lived through an epoch marked by the final crisis in the existence of the kingdom of Israel. Dark omens of every kind were around him, and he seems to have been too frivolous to see them. If he plumed himself on the removal of the two relentless invaders Rezin and Pekah, he must have lived to feel that the terror of Assyria had come appreciably nearer. Tiglath-Pileser had only helped Judah in furtherance of his own designs, and his exactions came like a chronic distress after the acuter crisis. Nor was there any improvement when he died in 727. He was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV., and Shalmaneser IV. by Sargon in 722, the year of the fall of Samaria. We know no more of Ahaz. The historian says that he was buried with his fathers, and the Chronicler adds, as in the case

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 15, 16.

[2] In justice to Ahaz, we should observe that (1) in every instance the later account multiplies and magnifies and gives a darker colouring to his offences; (2) that neither Isaiah, Micah, nor any other prophet has a word of reproach for such enormities in Ahaz.

of Uzziah and other kings, that he was not permitted to rest in the sepulchres of the kings.[1] He had sown the wind; his son Hezekiah had to reap the whirlwind.[2]

[1] It is a Jewish tradition that Hezekiah would not bury his father Ahaz in a sarcophagus, but on a bier (*Pesachin*, f. 56, 1; *Sanhedrin*, f. 47, 1; Grätz, *Gesch. d. Juden.*, ii. 224).

[2] His name, *Chizquîyyah*, is shortened from *Yechizquîyyahoo* (Isa. i. 1; 2 Kings xx. 10; Hos. i. 1). It means "Jehovah's strength" (*Gesen.*), or "Yah is might" (*Fürst*).

Probable Dates.

B.C.

745. Accession of Tiglath-Pileser.

746. Death of Uzziah. Accession of Jotham. First vision of Isaiah (Isa. vi.).

735. Accession of Ahaz. Syro-Ephraimitish war.

734–732. Siege and capture of Damascus, and ravage of Northern Israel by Tiglath-Pileser. Visit of Ahaz to Damascus.

727. Accession of Shalmaneser IV.

722. Accession of Sargon. Capture of Samaria, and captivity of the Ten Tribes.

720. Defeat of Sabaco by Sargon at Raphia.

715 (?). Accession of Hezekiah.

711. Sargon captures Ashdod.

707. Sargon defeats Merodach-Baladan, and captures Babylon.

705. Murder of Sargon. Accession of Sennacherib.

701. Sennacherib besieges Ekron. Defeats Egypt at Altaqu. Invades Judah, and spares Hezekiah. Invades Egypt, and sends the Rabshakeh to Jerusalem. Disaster of Assyrians at Pelusium, and disappearance from before Jerusalem.

697. Death of Hezekiah. Accession of Manasseh.

681. Death of Sennacherib.

608. Battle of Megiddo. Death of Josiah.

607. Fall of Nineveh and Assyria. Triumph of Babylon.

605. Battle of Carchemish. Defeat of Pharaoh Necho by Nebuchadrezzar.

599. First deportation of Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadrezzar.

588. Destruction of Jerusalem. Second deportation.

538. Cyrus captures Babylon.

536. Decree of Cyrus. Return of Zerubbabel and the first Jewish exiles.

458. Return of Ezra.

CHAPTER XXV

HEZEKIAH

B.C. 715-686 [1]

2 KINGS xviii

"For Ezekias had done the thing that pleased the Lord, and was strong in the ways of David his father, as Esay the prophet, who was great and faithful in his vision, had commanded him."—ECCLUS. xlviii. 22.

THE reign of Hezekiah was epoch-making in many respects, but especially for its religious reformation, and the relations of Judah with Assyria and with Babylon. It is also most closely interwoven with the annals of Hebrew prophecy, and acquires unwonted lustre from the magnificent activity and impassioned eloquence of the great prophet Isaiah, who merits in many ways the title of "the Evangelical Prophet," and who was the greatest of the prophets of the Old Dispensation.

According to the notice in 2 Kings xviii. 2, Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign in the third year of Hoshea of Israel. This, however, is practically impossible consistently with the dates that Ahaz reigned sixteen years and became king at the age of twenty, for it would then follow that Hezekiah was born when his father was a mere boy—

[1] The first of these dates is highly uncertain, as is the entire chronology of this reign. I follow Kittel.

and this, although Hezekiah does not seem to have been the eldest son; for Ahaz had burnt "his son," and, according to the Chronicler, more than one son, to propitiate Moloch. Probably Hezekiah was a boy of fifteen when he began to reign. The chronology of his reign of twenty-nine years is, unhappily, much confused.

The historian of the Kings agrees with the Chronicler, and the son of Sirach, in pronouncing upon him a high eulogy, and making him equal even to David in faithfulness. There is, however, much difference in the method of their descriptions of his doings. The historian devotes but one verse to his reformation—which probably began early in his reign, though it occupied many years. The Chronicler, on the other hand, in his three chapters manages to overlook, if not to suppress, the one incident of the reformation which is of the deepest interest. It is exactly one of those suppressions which help to create the deep misgiving as to the historic exactness of this biassed and late historian. It must be regarded as doubtful whether many of the Levitic details in which he revels are or are not intended to be literally historic. Imaginative additions to literal history became common among the Jews after the Exile, and leaders of that day instinctively drew the line between moral homiletics and literal history. It may be perfectly historical that, as the Chronicler says, Hezekiah opened and repaired the Temple; gathered the priests and the Levites together, and made them cleanse themselves; offered a solemn sacrifice; reappointed the musical services; and—though this can hardly have been till after the Fall of Samaria in 722—invited all the Israelites to a solemn, but in some respects irregular, passover of fourteen days. It may be true also that he broke up the

idolatrous altars in Jerusalem, and tossed their *débris* into the Kidron; and (again after the deportation of Israel) destroyed some of the *bamoth* in Israel as well as in Judah. If he reinstituted the courses of the priests, the collection of tithes, and all else that he is said to have done,[1] he accomplished quite as much as was effected in the reign of his great-grandson Josiah. But while the Chronicler dwells on all this at such length, what induces him to omit the most significant fact of all—the destruction of the brazen serpent?

The historian tells us that Hezekiah "removed the *bamoth*"—the chapels on the high places, with their ephods and teraphim—whether dedicated to the worship of Jehovah or profaned by alien idolatry. That he did, or attempted, something of this kind seems certain; for the Rabshakeh, if we regard his speech as historical in its details, actually taunted him with impiety, and threatened him with the wrath of Jehovah on this very account. Yet here we are at once met with the many difficulties with which the history of Israel abounds, and which remind us at every turn that we know much less about the inner life and religious conditions of the Hebrews than we might infer from a superficial study of the historians who wrote so many centuries after the events which they describe. Over and over again their incidental notices reveal a condition of society and worship which violently collides with what seems to be their general estimate. Who, for instance, would not infer from this notice that in Judah, at any rate, the king's suppression of the "high places," and above all of those which were idolatrous, had been tolerably thorough? How much, then, are we amazed to find

[1] 2 Chron. xxxi. 2–21.

that Hezekiah had not effectually desecrated even the old shrines which Solomon had erected to Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom[1] "at the right hand of the mount of corruption"—in other words, on one of the peaks of the Mount of Olives, in full view of the walls of Jerusalem and of the Temple Hill!

"And he brake the images," or, as the R.V more correctly renders it, "the pillars," the *matstseboth*. Originally—that is, before the appearance of the Deuteronomic and the Priestly Codes—no objection seems to have been felt to the erection of a *matstsebah*. Jacob erected one of these *baitulia* or anointed stones at Bethel, with every sign of Divine approval.[2] Moses erected twelve round his altar at Sinai.[3] Joshua erected them in Shechem and on Mount Ebal. Hosea, in one passage (iii. 4), seems to mention pillars, ephods, and teraphim as legitimate objects of desire. Whether they have any relation to obelisks, and what is their exact significance, is uncertain; but they had become objects of just suspicion in the universal tendency to idolatry, and in the deepening conviction that the second commandment required a far more rigid adherence than it had hitherto received.

"And cut down the groves"—or rather the Asherim, the wooden, and probably in some instances phallic, emblems of the nature-goddess Asherah, the goddess of fertility.[4] She is sometimes identified with Astarte,

[1] Josiah did this many years later (2 Kings xxiii. 13).

[2] Gen. xxxv. 14. See Spencer, *De legg. Hebr.*, i. 444; Bochart, *Canaan*, ii. 2.

[3] Exod. xxiv. 4. Comp. Deut. vii. 5, xii. 3, xvi. 22; Lev. xxvi. 1; 2 Chron. xiv. 3, xxxi. 1; Jer. xliii. 13; Hos. x. 2; Mic. v. 13 (where the A.V. often has "statue" or "image"). Comp. Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, i. 24; Arnob., *c. Gent.*, i. 39.

[4] The rendering "grove" in the A.V. is borrowed from the ἄλσοι

the goddess of the moon and of love; but there is no sufficient ground for the identification. Some, indeed, doubt whether Asherah is the name of a goddess at all. They suppose that the word only means a consecrated pole or pillar, emblematic of the sacred tree.[1]

Then comes the startling addition, "And brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: *for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it.*" This addition is all the more singular because the Hebrew tense implies habitual worship. The story of the brazen serpent of the wilderness is told in Num. xxi. 9; but not an allusion to it occurs anywhere, till now—some eight centuries later—we are told that up to this time the children of Israel had been in the habit of burning incense to it! Comparing Num. xxi. 4, with xxxiii. 42, we find that the scene of the serpent-plague of the Exodus was either Zalmonah ("the place of the image") or Punon, which Bochart connects with Phainoi, a place mentioned as famous for copper-mines.[2] Moses, for unknown reasons, chose it as an innocent and potent symbol; but obviously in later days it subserved, or was mingled with, the tendency to ophiolatry, which has been fatally common in all ages

of the LXX., and the *lucus* of the Vulgate. On the connection of the Asherah with the sacred tree of the Assyrian, see my article on "Grove" in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*; and Fergusson, *Nineveh and Persepolis Restored*, 299–304. On the worship of Asherah, see 1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xxi. 3–7, xxiii. 4; 2 Chron. xv. 16; Judg. iii. 5–7, vi. 25, xviii. 18. Baudissin in *Herzog Realencykl.*, *s.v.* We may well be startled by the prevalence of idolatry in Jerusalem revealed in Isa. x. 11, xxvii. 9, xxix. 11, xxx. 9, 22, etc.

[1] See Wellhausen, *Hist.*, 235; Stade, *Gesch. d. V. I.*, 460; W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 171; Cheyne, *Isaiah*, ii. 303; Renan, *Hist. du Peuple d'Israel*, i. 230 (Prof. Driver, *Bibl. Dict.* i. 258, 2nd edition).

[2] *Hierozoicon*, ii. 3, § 13.

in many heathen lands. It is indeed most difficult to understand a state of things in which the children of Israel habitually *burned incense* to this venerable relic, nor can we imagine that this was done without the cognisance and connivance of the priests. Ewald makes the conjecture that the brazen *Saraph* had been left at Zalmonah, and was an occasional object of Israelite adoration in pilgrimage for the purpose. There is, however, nothing more extraordinary in the prevalence of serpent-worship among the Jews than in the fact that, "in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, we" (the Jews), "and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, burnt incense unto the Queen of Heaven."[1] If this were the case, the serpent may have been brought to Jerusalem in the idolatrous reign of Ahaz. It shows an intensity of reforming zeal, and an inspired insight into the reality of things, that Hezekiah should not have hesitated to smash to pieces so interesting a relic of the oldest history of his people, rather than see it abused to idolatrous purposes.[2] Certainly, in conduct so heroic, and hatred of idolatry so strong, the Puritans might well find sufficient authority for removing from Westminster Abbey the images of the Virgin, which, in their opinion, had been worshipped, and before which lamps had been perpetually burned. If we can imagine an English king breaking to pieces the shrine of the Confessor in the Abbey, or a French king destroying the sacred

[1] Jer. xliv. 17. In the collection of antiquities of Baron Ustinoff at Jaffa are five or six dragon-headed serpents, with ears of copper and hollow inside. They are ancient, and were perhaps used as talismanic copies of Nehushtan.

[2] If this was a genuine relic, it must have been nearly eight hundred years old. It is never mentioned elsewhere.

ampulla of Rheims or the *goupillon* of St. Eligius, on the ground that many regarded them with superstitious reverence, we may measure the effect produced by this startling act of Puritan zeal on the part of Hezekiah.

"And he called it *Nehushtan.*" If this rendering—in which our A.V. and R.V. follow the LXX. and the Vulgate—be correct, Hezekiah justified the iconoclasm by a brilliant play of words.[1] The Hebrew words for "a serpent" (*nachash*) and for brass (*nechosheth*) are closely akin to each other; and the king showed his just estimate of the relic which had been so shamefully abused by contemptuously designating it—as it was in itself and apart from its sacred historic associations—"nehushtan," a thing of brass. The rendering, however, is uncertain, for the phrase may be impersonal—"one" or "they" called it Nehushtan[2]—in which case the assonance had lost any ironic connotation.[3]

For this act of purity of worship, and for other reasons, the historian calls Hezekiah the best of all the kings of Judah, superior alike to all his predecessors and all his successors. He regarded him as coming up

[1] נְחֻשְׁתָּן, "a brazen thing." The king certainly showed a horror of sacerdotal imposture and religious materialism. Yet Renan argues, from Isa. x. 11, xxvii. 9, xxx. 9, 22, that he must have had a certain amount of tolerance. See *Hist. du Peuple d'Israel*, iii. 30.

[2] 2 Kings xviii. 4. *Vayyikra* is like the English indefinite plural. The impersonal rendering (as in other passages) is adopted in the Targum of Jonathan, the Peshito, etc., and by Luther, Bunsen, Ewald, and most moderns.

[3] This relic is still shown in the Church of St. Ambrose at Milan. It used to be the popular notion that it would hiss at the end of the world. The history of the Milan "relic" is that a Milanese envoy to the court of the Emperor John Zimisces at Constantinople chose it from the imperial treasures, being assured that it was made of the same metal that Hezekiah had broken up (Sigonius, *Hist. Regn. Ital.*, vii.). It is probably a symbol used by some ophite sect. See Dean Plumptre, *Dict. of Bibl.*, *s.v.* "Serpent."

to the Deuteronomic ideal, and says that therefore "the Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth."

The date of this great reformation is rendered uncertain by the impossibility of ascertaining the exact order of Isaiah's prophecies. The most probable view is that it was gradual, and some of the king's most effective measures may not have been carried out till after the deliverance from Assyria. It is clear, however, that the wisdom of Hezekiah and his counsellors began from the first to uplift Judah from the degradation and decrepitude to which it had sunk under the reign of Ahaz. The boy-king found a wretched state of affairs at his accession. His father had bequeathed to him "an empty treasury, a ruined peasantry, an unprotected frontier, and a shattered army";[1] but although he was still the vassal of Assyria, he reverted to the ideas of his great-grandfather Uzziah. He strengthened the city, and enabled it to stand a siege by improving the water-supply. Of these labours we have, in all probability, a most interesting confirmation in the inscription by Hezekiah's engineers, discovered in 1880, on the rocky walls of the subterranean tunnel (*siloh*) between the spring of Gihon and the Pool of Siloam.[2] He encouraged agriculture, the storage of

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 8; Driver, *Isaiah*, 68.

[2] The diverting of the water-courses enabled him to bring the water into the city by a subterranean tunnel. The Saracens took a similar precaution (Gul. Tyr., viii. 7). See Appendix II., where the inscription is given; and compare 2 Chron. xxxii. 30. Apparently it carried the water of Gihon to the south-east gate, where were the king's gardens. Ecclus. xlviii. 17: "Ezekias fortified his city, and brought in water into the midst thereof: he digged the hard rock with iron, and made wells for water." For "water" the MSS. read "Gog," a corruption probably for ἀγωγὸν, "a conduit" (Geiger) or "Gihon" (Fritzsche).

produce, and the proper tendance of flocks and herds, so that he acquired wealth which dimly reminded men of the days of Solomon.

There is little doubt that he early meditated revolt from Assyria; for renewed faithfulness to Jehovah had elevated the moral tone, and therefore the courage and hopefulness, of the whole people. The Forty-Sixth Psalm, whatever may be its date, expresses the invincible spirit of a nation which in its penitence and self-purification began to feel itself irresistible, and could sing:—

"God is our hope and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved,
Though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.
There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,
The Holy City where dwells the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; therefore shall she not be shaken:
God shall help her, and that right early.
Heathens raged and kingdoms trembled:
He lifted His voice—the earth melted away.
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
Elohim of Jacob is our refuge."[1]

It was no doubt the spirit of renewed confidence which led Hezekiah to undertake his one military enterprise—the chastisement of the long-troublesome Philistines. He was entirely successful. He not only won back the cities which his father had lost,[2] but he also dispossessed them of their own cities, even unto Gaza, which was their southernmost possession—"from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city."[3] There can be no doubt that this act involved an almost

[1] Psalm xlvi. 1–11.

[2] 2 Chron. xxviii. 18.

[3] 2 Kings xviii. 8: comp. xvii. 9. Josephus says that he failed to take Gath (*Antt.*, IX. xiii. 3).

open defiance of the Assyrian King; but if Hezekiah dreamed of independence, it was essential for him to be free from the raids and the menace of a neighbour so dangerous as Philistia, and so inveterately hostile. It is not improbable that he may have devoted to this war the money which would otherwise have gone to pay the tribute to Shalmaneser or Sargon, which had been continued since the date of the appeal of Ahaz to Tiglath-Pileser II. When Sargon applied for the tribute Hezekiah refused it, and even omitted to send the customary present.

It is clear that in this line of conduct the king was following the exhortations of Isaiah. It showed no small firmness of character that he was able to choose a decided course amid the chaos of contending counsels. Nothing but a most heroic courage could have enabled him, at any period of his reign, to defy that dark cloud of Assyrian war which ever loomed on the horizon, and from which but little sufficed to elicit the destructive lightning-flash.

There were three permanent parties in the Court of Hezekiah, each incessantly trying to sway the king to its own counsels, and each representing those counsels as indispensable to the happiness, and even to the existence, of the State.

I. There was the Assyrian party, urging with natural vehemence that the fierce northern king was as irresistible in power as he was terrible in vengeance. The fearful cruelties which had been committed at Beth-Arbel, the devastation and misery of the Trans-Jordanic tribes, the obliteration and deportation of the heavily afflicted districts of Zebulon, Naphtali, and the way of the sea in Galilee of the nations, the already inevitable and imminent destruction of Samaria and her

king and the whole Northern Kingdom, together with that certain deportation of its inhabitants of which the fatal policy had been established by Tiglath-Pileser, would constitute weighty arguments against resistance. Such considerations would appeal powerfully to the panic of the despondent section of the community, which was only actuated, as most men are, by considerations of ordinary political expediency. The foul apparition of the Ninevites, which for five centuries afflicted the nations, is now only visible to us in the bas-reliefs and inscriptions unearthed from their burnt palaces. There they live before us in their own sculptures, with their "thickset, sensual figures," and the expression of calm and settled ferocity on their faces, exhibiting a frightful nonchalance as they look on at the infliction of diabolical atrocities upon their vanquished enemies. But in the eighth century before Christ they were visible to all the eastern world in the exuberance of the most brutal parts of the nature of man. Men had heard how, a century earlier, Assurnazipal boasted that he had "dyed the mountains of the Nairi with blood like wool"; how he had flayed captive kings alive, and dressed pillars with their skins; how he had walled up others alive, or impaled them on stakes; how he had burnt boys and girls alive, put out eyes, cut off hands, feet, ears, and noses, pulled out the tongues of his enemies, and "at the command of Assur his god" had flung their limbs to vultures and eagles, to dogs and bears. The Jews, too, must have realised with a vividness which is to us impossible the cruel nature of the usurper Sargon. He is represented on his monuments as putting out with his own hands the eyes of his miserable captives; while, to prevent them from flinching when the spear which he holds in his hand

is plunged into their eye-sockets, a hook is inserted through their nose and lips and held fast with a bridle. Can we not imagine the pathos with which this party would depict such horrors to the tremblers of Judah? Would they not bewail the fanaticism which led the prophets to seduce their king into the suicidal policy of defying such a power? To these men the sole path of national safety lay in continuing to be quiet vassals and faithful tributaries of these destroyers of cities and treaders-down of foes.

II. Then there was the Egyptian party, headed probably by the powerful Shebna, the chancellor.[1] His foreign name, the fact that his father is not mentioned, and the question of Isaiah—"What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here?"—seem to indicate that he was by birth a foreigner, perhaps a Syrian.[2] The prophet, indignant at his powerful interference with domestic politics, threatens him, in words of tremendous energy, with exile and degradation.[3] He lost his place of chancellor, and we next find him in the inferior, though still honourable, office of secretary (*sopher*, 2 Kings xviii. 18), while Eliakim had been promoted to his vacant place (Isa. xxii. 21). Perhaps he may have afterwards repented, and the doom have been

[1] A.V., "treasurer" (*soken*; lit., "deputy" or "associate": Isa. xxii. 15). He was "over the household." The Egyptian alliance had for Judah, as Renan points out, some of the fascination that a Russian alliance has often had for troubled spirits in France (*Hist. du Peuple d'Israel*, iii. 12).

[2] Renan says that he may have been a Sebennyite, and his name Sebent.

[3] Isa. xxii. 17, 18: "Behold, the Lord shall sling and sling, and pack and pack, and toss and toss thee away like a ball into a distant land and there thou shalt die" (Stanley). The versions vary considerably.

lightened.[1] Circumstances at any rate reduced him from the scornful spirit which seems to have marked his earlier opposition to the prophetic counsels, and perhaps the powerful warning and menace of Isaiah may have exercised an influence on his mind.

III. The third party, if it could even be called a party, was that of Isaiah and a few of the faithful, aided no doubt by the influence of the prophecies of Micah. Their attitude to both the other parties was antagonistic.

i. As regards the Assyrian, they did not attempt to minimise the danger. They represented the peril from the kingdom of Nineveh as God's appointed scourge for the transgressions of Judah, as it had been for the transgressions of Israel.

Thus Micah sees in imagination the terrible march of the invader by Gath, Akko, Beth-le-Aphrah, Maroth, Lachish, and Adullam. He plays with bitter anguish on the name of each town as an omen of humiliation and ruin, and calls on Zion to make herself bald for the children of her delight, and to enlarge her baldness as the vultures, because they are gone into captivity.[2] He turns fiercely on the greedy grandees, the false prophets, the blood-stained princes, the hireling priests, the bribe-taking soothsayers, who were responsible for the guilt which should draw down the vengeance. He ends with the fearful prophecy—which struck a chill into men's hearts a century later, and had an important influence on Jewish history—"Therefore, because of you shall Zion be ploughed as a field,

[1] Isa. xxxvii. 2. There can be little doubt that there were not *two* Shebnas.

[2] Mic. i. 10–16. See the writer's *Minor Prophets* ("Men of the Bible" Series), pp. 130–133, for an explanation of this enigmatic prophecy.

and Jerusalem become ruins, and the hill of the Temple as heights in the wood" ;—though there should be an ultimate deliverance from Migdal-Eder, and a remnant should be saved.[1]

Similar to Micah's, and possibly not uninfluenced by it, is Isaiah's imaginary picture of the march of Assyria, which must have been full of terror to the poor inhabitants of Jerusalem.[2]

"He is come to Aiath!
He is passed through Migron!
At Michmash he layeth up his baggage:
They are gone over the pass:
'Geba,' they cry, 'is our lodging.'
Ramah trembleth:
Gibeah of Saul is fled!
Raise thy shrill cries, O daughter of Gallim!
Hearken, O Laishah! Answer her, O Anathoth!
Madmenah is in wild flight (?).
The inhabitants of Gebim gather their stuff to flee.
This very day shall he halt at Nob.
He shaketh his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion,
The hill of Jerusalem."

Yet Isaiah, and the little band of prophets, in spite of their perils, did *not* share the views of the Assyrian party or counsel submission. On the contrary, even as they contemplate in imagination this terrific march of Sargon, they threaten Assyria. The Assyrian might smite Judah, but God should smite the Assyrians. He boasts that he will rifle the riches of the people as one robs the eggs of a trembling bird, which does not dare

[1] Jer. xxvi. 8–24. He tells us that the prophecy was delivered in the reign of Hezekiah. See my *Minor Prophets*, pp. 123–140.

[2] Isa. x. 28–32. It would involve a cross-country route over several deep ravines—*e.g.*, the Wady Suweinit, near Michmash. In 1 Sam. xiv. 2, Thenius, for "Migron," reads "the Precipice." Some take Aiath for Ai, three miles south of Bethel. Renan says (*Hist. du Peuple d'Israel*, iii.): "Nom d'Anathoth, arrangé symboliquement."

to cheep or move the wing.[1] But Isaiah tells him that he is but the axe boasting against the hewer, and the wooden staff lifting itself up against its wielder. Burning should be scattered over his glory. The Lord of hosts should lop his boughs with terror, and a mighty one should hew down the crashing forest of his haughty Lebanon.

ii. Still more indignant were the true prophets against those who trusted in an alliance with Egypt. From first to last Isaiah warned Ahaz, and warned Hezekiah, that no reliance was to be placed on Egyptian promises—that Egypt was but like the reed of his own Nile. He mocked the hopes placed on Egyptian intervention as being no less sure of disannulment than a covenant with death and an agreement with Sheol. This rebellious reliance on the shadow of Egypt was but the weaving of an unrighteous web, and the adding of sin to sin. It should lead to nothing but shame and confusion, and the Jewish ambassadors to Zoan and Egypt should only have to blush for a people that could neither help nor profit. And then branding Egypt with the old insulting name of Rahab, or "Blusterer," he says,—

> "Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose.
> Therefore have I called her 'Rahab, that sitteth still.'"

Indolent braggart—that was the only designation which she deserved! Intrigue and braggadocio—smoke and lukewarm water,—this was all which could be expected from *her!*[2]

[1] Isa. x. 14. The metaphor of a bird's nest occurs more than once in the boastful Assyrian records.

[2] Isa. xxx. 1–7. Rahab means "fierceness," "insolence." For the various uses of the word, see Job xxvi. 12; Isa. li. 9, 10, 15; Psalm lxxxix. 9, 10, lxxxvii. 4, 5.

Such teaching was eminently distasteful to the worldly politicians, who regarded faith in Jehovah's intervention as no better than ridiculous fanaticism, and forgot God's wisdom in the inflated self-satisfaction of their own. The priests—luxurious, drunken, scornful—were naturally with them. Men were fine and stylish, and in their religious criticisms could not express too lofty a contempt for any one who, like Isaiah, was too sincere to care for the mere polishing of phrases, and too much in earnest to shrink from reiteration. In their self-indulgent banquets these sleek, smug euphemists made themselves very merry over Isaiah's simplicity, reiteration, and directness of expression. With hiccoughing insolence they asked whether they were to be treated like weaned babes; and then wagging their heads, as their successors did at Christ upon the cross, they indulged themselves in a mimicry, which they regarded as witty, of Isaiah's style and manner. With him they said it is all,—

"Tsav-la-tsav, tsav-la-tsav,
Quav-la-quav, quav-la-quav,
Z'eir sham, Z'eir sham!"—

which may be imitated thus:—With him it is always "Bit and bit, bid and bid, for-bid and for-bid, for*bid* and for*bid*, a lit-tle bit here, a lit-tle bit there."[1] Monosyllable is heaped on monosyllable; and no doubt the speakers tipsily adopted the tones of fond mothers addressing their babes and weanlings. Using the Hebrew words, one of these shameless roysterers would say, "*Tsav-la-tsav, tsav-la-tsav, quav-la-quav, quav-la-quav, Z'eir sham, Z'eir sham*,—that is how that

[1] See Dr. S. Cox (*Expositor*, i. 98–104) on Isa. xxviii. 7–13.

simpleton Isaiah speaks." And then doubtless a drunken laugh would go round the table, and half a dozen of them would be saying thus, "*Tsav-la-tsav, tsav-la-tsav,*" at once. They derided Isaiah just as the philosophers of Athens derided St. Paul—as a mere *spermologos,* "a seed-pecker!"[1] or "picker-up of learning's crumbs." Is all this petty monosyllabism fit teaching for persons like us? Are we to be taught by copy-books? Do we need the censorship of this Old Morality?

On whom, full of the fire of God, Isaiah turned, and told these scornful tipsters, who lorded it over God's heritage in Jerusalam, that, since they disdained his stammerings, God would teach them by men of strange lips and alien tongue. They might mimic the style of the Assyrians also if they liked; but they should fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.[2]

It must not be forgotten that the struggle of the prophets against these parties was far more severe than we might suppose. The politicians of expediency had supporters among the leading princes. The priests—whom the prophets so constantly and sternly denounce—adhered to them; and, as usual, the women were all of the priestly party (comp. Isa. xxxii. 9–20). The king, indeed, was inclined to side with his prophet, but the king was terribly overshadowed by a powerful and worldly aristocracy, of which the influence was almost always on the side of luxury, idolatry, and oppression.

iii. But what had Isaiah to offer in the place of the policy of these worldly and sacerdotal advisers of the king? It was the simple command "Trust in the Lord." It was the threefold message "God is high; God is

[1] Acts xvii. 18.

[2] Isa. xxviii. 7–22.

near; God is Love."[1] Had he not told Ahaz not to fear the "stumps of two smouldering torches," when Rezin and Pekah seemed awfully dangerous to Judah? So he tells them now that, though their sins had necessitated the rushing stroke of Assyrian judgment, Zion should not be utterly destroyed. In Isaiah "the calmness requisite for sagacity rose from faith." Mr. Bagehot might have appealed to Isaiah's whole policy in illustration of what he has so well described as the military and political benefits of religion. Monotheism is of advantage to men not only "by reason of the high concentration of steady feeling which it produces, but also for the mental calmness and sagacity which surely springs from a pure and vivid conviction that the Lord reigneth."[2] Isaiah's whole conviction might have been summed up in the name of the king himself: "Jehovah maketh strong."

King Hezekiah, apparently not a man of much personal force, though of sincere piety, was naturally distracted by the counsels of these three parties: and who can judge him severely if, beset with such terrific dangers, he occasionally wavered, now to one side, now to the other? On the whole, it is clear that he was wise and faithful, and deserves the high eulogy that his faith failed not. Naturally he had not within his soul that burning light of inspiration which made Isaiah so sure that, even though clouds and darkness might lower on every side, God was an eternal Sun, which flamed for ever in the zenith, even when not visible to any eye save that of Faith.

[1] Professor Smith, *Isaiah*, i. 12.

[2] Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, p. 73; Smith, *Isaiah*, 109.

CHAPTER XXVI

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS, AND THE EMBASSY FROM BABYLON

2 KINGS xx. 1—19

"Thou hast loved me out of the pit of nothingness."—ISA. xxxviii. 17 (A.V., margin).

"See the shadow of the dial
In the lot of every one
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the Sun."

E. B. BROWNING.

IN the chaos of uncertainties which surrounds the chronology of King Hezekiah's reign, it is impossible to fix a precise date to the sickness which almost brought him to the grave. It has, however, been conjectured by some Assyriologists that the story of this episode has been displaced, because it seemed to break the continuity of the narrative of the Assyrian invasion; and that, though it is placed in the Book of Kings after the deliverance from Sennacherib, it really followed the earlier incursion of Sargon. This is rendered more probable by Isaiah's promise (2 Kings xx. 6), "I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King of Assyria," and by the fact that Hezekiah still possessed such numerous and splendid treasures to display to the ambassadors of Merodach-Baladan. This could hardly have been the case after he had been forced to

pay a fine to the King of Assyria of all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, to cut off the gold from the doors and pillars of the Temple, and even to send as captives to Nineveh some of his wives, and of the eunuchs of his palace.[1] The date "in those days" (2 Kings xx. 1) is vague and elastic, and may apply to any time before or after the great invasion.

He was sick unto death. The only indication which we have of the nature of his illness is that it took the form of a carbuncle or imposthume,[2] which could be locally treated, but which, in days of very imperfect therapeutic knowledge, might easily end in death, especially if it were on the back of the neck. The conjecture of Witsius and others that it was a form of the plague which they suppose to have caused the disaster to the Assyrian army has nothing whatever to recommend it.

Seeing the fatal character of his illness, Isaiah came to the king with the dark message, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

The message is interesting as furnishing yet another proof that even the most positive announcements of the prophets were, and were always meant to be, to some extent hypothetical and dependent on unexpressed conditions. This was the case with the famous prophecy of Micah that Zion should be ploughed down into a heap of ruins. It was never fulfilled; yet the prophet lost none of his authority, for it was well understood

[1] One of the first to point out the *necessary* rearrangement of the events of Hezekiah's reign was Dr. Hincks, in his paper on "A Rectification of Chronology which the newly discovered Apis-stêlês render necessary" (*Journ. of Sacred Lit.*, October 1858). See my article on Hezekiah, Smith, *Dict. of the Bible*, 2nd ed., ii. 1251.

[2] Heb., *sh'chîn*; LXX., ἕλκος; Vulg., *ulcus*.

that the doom which would otherwise have been carried out had been averted by timely penitence.

But the message of Isaiah fell with terrible anguish on the heart of the suffering king. He had hoped for a better fate. He had begun a great religious reformation. He had uplifted his people, at least in part, out of the moral slough into which they had fallen in the days of his predecessor. He had inspired into his threatened capital something of his own faith and courage. Surely he, if any man, might claim the old promises which Jehovah in His loving-kindness and truth had sworn to his father David and his father Abraham, that he being delivered out of the hand of his enemies should serve God without fear, walking in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of his life. He was but a young man still—perhaps not yet thirty years old; further, not only would he leave behind him an unfinished work, but he was childless,[1] and therefore it seemed as if with him would end the direct line of the house of David, heir to so many precious promises. He has left us—it is preserved in the Book of Isaiah—the poem which he wrote on his recovery, but which enshrines the emotion of his agonising anticipations[2]:—

"I said, In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol.
I am deprived of the residue of my years.
I said, I shall not see Yah, Yah, in the land of the living,
I shall behold no man more, when I am among them that cease to be.

[1] The Rabbis even make his sickness the punishment for his having neglected to secure an heir. He pleads that he foresaw the wickedness of his son. Isaiah tells him not to try to forestall God (*Berachoth*, f. 10, 1).

[2] Isa. xxxviii. 10–20.

Mine habitation is removed, and is carried away from me like a shepherd's tent.
Like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he will cut me from the thrum.

. . .

Like a swallow or a crane, so did I chatter;
I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward.
O Lord, I am oppressed; be Thou my surety."

We must remember, as we contemplate his utter prostration of soul, that he was not blessed, as we are, with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. All was dim and dark to him in the shadowy world of *eidola* beyond the grave, and many a century was to elapse before Christ brought life and immortality to light. To enter Sheol meant to Hezekiah to pass beyond the cheerful sunshine of earth and the felt presence of God. No more worship, no more gladness there!

"For Sheol cannot praise Thee, Death cannot celebrate Thee;
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth."

On every ground, therefore, the feelings of Hezekiah, had he not been a worshipper of God, might have been like those of Mycerinus, and, like that legendary Egyptian king, he might have cursed God before he died.

"My father loved injustice, and lived long;
I loved the good he scorned and hated wrong—
The gods declare my recompense to-day.
I looked for life more lasting, rule more high;
And when six years are measured, lo, I die!
Yet surely, O my people, did I ween
Man's justice from the all-just gods was given,
A light that from some upper point did beam,
Some better archetype whose seat was heaven:
A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
Did shadow somewhat of the life of gods."

The indignation of Mycerinus often finds an echo on

Pagan tombstones, as in the famous epitaph on the grave of the girl Procope :—

> "I, Procope, lift up my hands against the gods,
> Who took me hence undeserving,
> Aged nineteen years."

It was far otherwise with Hezekiah. There was anguish in his heart, but no rebellion or defiance. He wept sore; he turned his face to the wall and wept;[1] but as he wept he also prayed, and said,—

"O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight."

Isaiah, after delivering his dark message, and doubtless adding to it such words of human consolation as were possible—if under such circumstances any were possible—had left the king's chamber. On every ground his feelings must have been almost as overwhelmed with sorrow as those of the king. Hezekiah was personally his friend, and the hope of his nation. Doubtless the prophet's prayers rose as fervently and as effectually as those of Luther, which snatched his friend Melanchthon back from the very gates of death. By the time that he had reached the middle of the court,[2] he felt borne in upon him, by that Divine

[1] Comp. 1 Kings xxi. 4 (Ahab).

[2] 2 Kings xx. 4. The *Q'rî* or "read" text is, as here rendered, *chatsee* (comp. 1 Kings vii. 8), and is followed by the LXX. (*ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ τῇ μέσῃ*), by the Vulgate (*mediam partem atrii*), and by the A.V. The R.V., which adopts the Kethîb or written text, *ha'îr*, renders it "the middle part of the city." If this be the true reading, it would mean that Isaiah had gone some distance from the palace, and was now perhaps in the Valley between the Upper and the Lower City. But it seems not improbable that (1) "the steps of Ahaz" would be in the royal court, and (2) the answer of God, like the mercy of Christ to the suffering, may have come promptly as an echo to the appealing cry.

intuition which constituted his prophetic call, the certainty that God would withdraw the immediate doom which he had been commissioned to announce. It has been conjectured by some that the conviction was deepened in his mind by observing on the steps of Ahaz one of those remarkable but rare effects of refraction—or, as some have conjectured, of a solar eclipse, involving an obscuration of the upper limb of the sun—which had seemed to take the advancing shadow ten steps backwards; and that this was to him a sign from heaven of the promise of God and the prolongation of the king's life. Awestruck and glad, he hastened back into the presence of the dying king with the life-giving message that God had heard his prayer, and seen his tears, and would add fifteen years to his life, and would defend him, and deliver him and Jerusalem out of the hand of the King of Assyria. And this should be the sign to him from Jehovah—Jehovah would bring again the shadow ten steps up the stairs of Ahaz. To this sign—if it was visible from the chamber-window—he called the attention of the astonished king.[1]

We here naturally follow the narrative of Isaiah himself, as more authoritative than that of the historian of the Kings as to details in which they differ.[2] Not only is it quite in accordance with all that we know of history that slight variations should occur in the

[1] The LXX. calls "the stairs" *ἀναβαθμοὺς τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρός σου*, and so, too, Josephus (*Antt.*, X. ii. 1). The Targum calls them "an hour-stone." Symmachus has, *στρέψω τὴν σκίαν τῶν γραμμῶν ἣ κατέβη ἐν ὡρολογίῳ Ἀχάζ*.

[2] It should, however, be observed that on the question of priority critics are divided. Grotius, Vitringa, Paulus, Drechsler, etc., thought that the account in the Book of Isaiah is the original; De Wette, Maurer, Koster, Winer, Driver, etc., regard that account as a later abbreviation, perhaps from a common source.

traditions of long-past times, but the text of the Book of Kings suggests some difficulty. There we read that Hezekiah asked Isaiah what should be the sign of the promise—not mentioned in Isaiah—that he should go up to the House of the Lord the third day. Isaiah then asked him whether the sign should be that the shadow should advance ten steps, or recede ten steps. But there is no interrogation in the Hebrew, which rather means, "The shadow hath advanced ten steps . . if it shall recede ten steps?" or if we insert the interrogation in the first clause, "Hath the shadow advanced ten steps?"[1] The king's natural answer to so strange an alternative would be that for the shadow to advance ten steps was nothing; whereas its retrogression would be a sign indeed. Then Isaiah cried unto Jehovah, and the shadow went backward. In the obvious divergence of details we naturally follow Isaiah himself; and if it be a true and understood rule of all theology, "*Miracula non sunt multiplicanda præter necessitatem*," the miracle in this case—in the opportuneness of its occurrence, and the issues which it inspired—was none the less a miracle because it was carried out in direct accordance with God's unseen, perpetual, miraculous Providence, which none but unbelievers will nickname Chance. That we are here dealing with an historic incident is certain; and they who see and acknowledge God in all history find no difficulty at all in seeing His dealings with men in striking interpositions. But these, by the analogy of His whole Divine economy, would naturally be carried out in accordance with natural laws.

The words rendered "the sun-dial of Ahaz" mean no more than "the steps [*ma'aloth*] of Ahaz." Ahaz

[1] See Professor Lumby, *ad loc.*

evidently was a king of æsthetic tastes, who was fond of introducing foreign novelties and curiosities into Jerusalem.[1] Steps, with a staff on the top of them as a gnomon, to serve as sun-dials had been invented at Babylon, and Ahaz may probably have become acquainted with their form and use when he paid his visit to Tiglath-Pileser at Damascus. No one could blame him—it was indeed a meritorious act—to introduce to his people so useful an invention. The word "hour" first occurs in Dan. iii. 6, and it was doubtless from Babylon that the Hebrews borrowed the division of days into hours. This is the earliest instance in the Bible of the mention of any instrument to measure time. That the recession of the shadow could be caused by refraction is certain, for it has been observed in modern days. Thus, as is mentioned by Rosenmüller, on March 27th, 1703, Père Romauld, prior of the monastery at Metz, noticed that the shadow on his dial deviated an hour and a half, owing to refraction in the higher regions of the atmosphere.[2] Or again, according to Mr. Bosanquet, the same effect might have been produced by the darkening shadow of an eclipse. But while he appealed to Divine indications the great prophet did not neglect natural remedies. He ordered that a cake of figs should be laid on the imposthume. It was a recognised and an efficient remedy, still recommended, centuries later, by Dioscorides, by Pliny, and by St. Jerome. By God's blessing on man's therapeutic care, the king was speedily rescued from the gates of death. Constantly in Scripture what we call the miraculous and what we call the providential are mingled together. To those who regard the

[1] There is an exactly similar sun-dial not far from Delhi.

[2] *Journ. of Asiatic Soc.*, xv. 286–293.

providential as a constant miracle, the question of the miraculous becomes subordinate.[1]

With intense joy and gratitude the king hailed the respite which God had granted him. In fifteen years much might be done, much might be hoped for. All this he acknowledged with deep feeling in the song which he wrote on his recovery.

"I shall go as in solemn procession[2] all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.
O Lord, by these things men live,
And wholly therein is the life of my spirit.
Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness;
But Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of nothingness:
For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.

The Lord is ready to save me;
Therefore will we sing my songs to the stringed instruments
All the days of our life in the house of the Lord."[3]

"The wonder done in the land" was, according to the Chronicler, one of the grounds for the embassy which, after his recovery, Hezekiah received from Merodach-Baladan, the patriot prince of Babylon. The other ostensible object of the embassy was to send letters and a present in congratulation for the king's restoration to health. But the real object lay deeper, out of sight. It was to secure a southern alliance for Babylon against the incessant tyranny of Nineveh.

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[1] Figs have a recognised use for imposthumes. See Dioscorides and Pliny quoted in Celsius, *Hierobot.*, ii. 373. In the passage of *Berachoth* quoted above, Hezekiah in his sickness asks Isaiah to give him his daughter in marriage, that he may have an heir. Isaiah replies that the decree of his death is irrevocable. The king bids Isaiah depart, and says (quoting Job xiii. 15) that a man must not despair, even if a sword is laid on his neck.

[2] Comp. Psalm xlii. 4.

[3] Isa. xxxviii. 10–20.

Merodach-Baladan is mentioned in the inscriptions of Sargon.[1] He is described as "Merodach-Baladan, son of Baladan, King of Sumîr and Accad, king of the four countries, and conqueror of all his enemies." There had been long struggles, lasting indeed for centuries, between the city on the Euphrates and the city on the Tigris. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, had been victorious. Babylon—on the monuments Kur-Dunyash—had its original Accadian name of Ca-dinirra, which, like its Semitic equivalent Bal-el, means "Gate of God." Kalah (Larissa and Birs Nimroud) had been built by Shalmaneser I. before B.C. 1300. His son conquered Babylon, but not permanently; for in some later raid the Babylonians got possession of his signet-ring, with its proud inscription, "Conqueror of Kur-Dunyash," and it was not recovered by the Assyrians till six centuries later, when it fell into the hands of Sennacherib. About 1150 Nebuchadrezzar I. of Babylon thrice invaded Assyria, but there was again peace and alliance in 1100. Merodach-Baladan I. reigned before 900. The king who now sought the friendship of Hezekiah was the second of the name. He seized or recovered the throne of Babylon in 721, after the

[1] The Babylonian form of his name is Marduk-habal-iddi-na—*i.e.*, "Merodach gave a son." He is the Mardokempados of the *Ptolemaic Canon*, and the second fragment of his reign (six months) is mentioned by Polyhistor (*ap.* Euseb.). Josephus calls him Baladan (*Antt.*, X. ii. 2). He was originally the prince of the Chaldæan *Bit Yakim*. Sargon calls him "Merodach-Baladan, the foe, the perverse, who, contrary to the will of the great gods, ruled as king at Babylon." He displaced him for a time by "Belibus, the son of a wise man, whom one had reared like a little dog" (as we might say "like a tame cat") "in my palace" (Schrader, ii. 32). In the Assyrian records he is often called (by mistake?) "the son of Yakim." For the adventures of the Babylonian hero, see Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 213 ff., 224 ff., 227, and in Riehm, *Handwörterbuch*, ii. 982.

death of Shalmaneser, perhaps because Sargon was a usurper of dubious descent. He helped the Elamites against Assyria. Sargon was compelled to retreat to Assyria, but returned in 712, and drove Merodach-Baladan to flight. He was captured and taken to Assyria. But on the murder of Sargon in 705, he again managed to seize the throne of Babylon, killed the viceroy who had been set up, and became king for six months. After this, Sennacherib invaded his country, defeated him, and drove him once more to flight. He was perhaps killed by his successor.

Whether his overtures to Hezekiah took place before his defeat by Sargon, or after his escape, is uncertain. In either case he doubtless sent a splendid embassy, for Babylon was far-famed for its golden magnificence as "the glory of kingdoms" and "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency."[1] At that time the Jews knew but little of the far-off city which was destined to be so closely interwoven with their future fortunes, as it was mingled with their oldest and dimmest traditions.[2] Apart from the magnificence of the presents brought to him, it was not unnatural that Hezekiah should regard this embassy with intense satisfaction. It was flattering to the power of his little kingdom that its alliance should be sought by the far-off and powerful capital on the great river;[3] it was still more encouraging to know that the frightful Nineveh had a strong enemy not far from her own frontier. Merodach-Baladan's ambassadors would be sure to inform Hezekiah that their lord had flung off the authority of Sargon, had kept him at bay for many years, and was still the undisputed

[1] Isa. xiv. 4, xiii. 19.

[2] Gen. x. 10, 11, xi. 1–9.

[3] Jos., *Antt.*, X. ii. 2: Σύμμαχόν τε αὐτὸν εἶναι παρεκάλει καὶ φίλον.

king of the dominions snatched from the common enemy. It might have seemed reasonable that Hezekiah, for his part, should desire to leave the most favourable impression of his wealth and power on the mind of his distant and magnificent ally. He "hearkened unto" the ambassadors, or, more properly, "he was glad of them" (R.V.),[1] and "showed them all the house of his spicery and other treasures, his precious unguents, his armoury, his bullion, plate, and the whole resources of his kingdom." The Chronicler regards this as ingratitude to God. He says that "Hezekiah rendered not again according unto the benefits done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem." It is a severe judgment of later times, and the historian of the Kings pronounces no such censure. Nevertheless, he records the stern sentence pronounced by Isaiah. The prophet had seen through the secret diplomacy of the Babylonian ambassadors, and knew that the real object of their mission was to induce his king to revolt against Assyria in reliance on an arm of flesh. He came to ask Hezekiah whose these men were, whence they came, and what they had said. The king told him who they were, and how he had received them; but he did not think it wise to reveal their secret proposals. If Isaiah had so vehemently reproved all negotiations with Egypt, there was little probability that he would sanction the overtures of Babylon. He saw in Hezekiah's conduct a vein of ostentatious elation, a swerving from theocratic faith; and with remarkable prophetic insight convinced the king of the error and impolicy of his proceedings, by announcing that the final and, in fact, irrevocable captivity of Judah

[1] 2 Kings xx. 13. LXX., ἐχάρη.

would ultimately come, not from Nineveh, the fierce enemy, whose cloud of war was lurid on the horizon, but from Babylon, the apparently weaker friend, who was now making overtures of amity. With what heartrending grief must the king have heard the doom that the display of his treasures would prove to be in the future an incentive to the cupidity of the kings of Babylon, and that they would sweep away all those precious things to the banks of the Euphrates with such final overthrow that even the descendants of David should be sunk to the infinite degradation of being eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon.[1] The doom seems to have been fulfilled in part in the reign of Hezekiah's son, and more fearfully in the days of his great-grandchildren.[2]

The king's pride was humbled to the dust. In the spirit of Job—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"[3]—he resigned himself without a murmur to the will of Heaven, and exclaimed that all which God did must be well done. At least God granted him a respite. Peace and truth would be in his own days; for that let him be thankful. They were words of humble resignation, uttered by one who had learnt to believe that whatever God decreed was just and right.

It would be unjust to measure the feelings of those far centuries by those of our own day, and there was none of the gross selfishness in the words of Hezekiah which led Nero to quote the line—

"When I am dead, let earth be mixed with fire";

or which led Louis XIV. to say—

"Après moi le déluge."

[1] See Dan. i. 6. [2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. [3] Job i. 21.

We may perhaps trace in his exclamation something of the fatalism which gives a touch of apathy to the submissiveness of the Oriental. Some, too, have imagined that his distress was tinged by a gleam of happiness at the implicit promise that he should have a son. His wife's name was Hephzibah ("My delight is in her)," and within two years she brought forth the firstborn son, whose career, indeed, was dark and evil, but who became in due time an ancestor of the promised Messiah. The name "Manasseh" given him by his parents recalled the child born to Joseph in the land of his exile who had caused him to forget his sorrows.[1] Hezekiah had the spirit which says,—

"That which Thou blessest is most good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right which seems most wrong,
So it be Thy sweet will."

[1] Manasseh seems to mean "one who forgets." See Gen. xli. 51. It was the name of the husband of Judith (Judith viii. 2), and is found in Ezra x. 30, 33.

CHAPTER XXVII

HEZEKIAH AND ASSYRIA

B.C. 701

2 KINGS xviii. 13—xix. 37

Ἀλλ' ὁ σοφώτατος βασιλεὺς οὐχ ὅπλα ταῖς ἐκείνων βλασφημίαις, ἀλλὰ προσευχὴν καὶ δάκρυα καὶ σάκκον ἀντέταξεν.—THEODORET.

"When, sudden—how think ye the end?
Did I say 'without friend'?
Say rather from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe,
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast,
Where the wretch was safe pressed."

BROWNING.

ALTHOUGH during a few memorable scenes the relations of Judah with Assyria in the reign of Hezekiah leap into fierce light, many previous details are unfortunately left in the deepest obscurity—an obscurity all the more impenetrable from the lack of certain dates. It will perhaps help to simplify our conceptions if we first sketch what is known of Assyria from the cuneiform inscriptions, and then fill up the sketch of those scenes which are more minutely delineated in the Book of Kings and in the prophecies of Isaiah.

Sargon—perhaps a successful general of royal blood, though he never calls himself the son of any one[1]—

[1] One legend of his birth resembles the finding of Moses in the bulrushes.

seems to have usurped the throne on the death of Shalmaneser IV., during the siege of Samaria in B.C. 722. He took Samaria, deported its inhabitants, and repeopled it from the Assyrian dominions. "In their place," he says, in his tablets in the halls of his palace at Khorsabad, "I settled the men of countries conquered [by my hand]."[1] In 720 he suppressed a futile attempt at revolt, headed by a pretender named Yahubid, in Hamath, which he reduced to "a heap of ruins." For some years after this he was occupied mainly on his northern frontiers, but he tells us that until 711 tribute continued to come in from Judah and Philistia. Meanwhile, these terrified and oppressed feudatories, writhing under the remorseless dominion of Nineveh, naturally began to listen to the intrigues of Egypt, whose interest it was to create a bulwark between herself and the invasion of the armies which were the abhorrence of the world. Under the influence of Sabaco, which gave new strength and unity to Egypt, she succeeded in seducing Ashdod from its allegiance to Sargon. Sargon at once deposed Azuri, King of Ashdod, and put his brother Ahimit in his place. The Ashdodites soon after deposed Ahimit, and elected in his place Jaman, who was in alliance with Sabaco.[2] This revolt was evidently favoured by Judah, Edom, and Moab; for Sargon says that they, as well as the people of Philistia, "were speaking treason." The rebellion was crushed by Sargon's promptitude.[3] He tells his own tale thus:—

"In the wrath of my heart I did not divide my army, and I did not diminish the ranks, but I marched against

[1] Schrader, *K. A. T.*, pp. 272–274; *Records of the Past*, vii. 28.
[2] Smith, *Eponym Canon*, p. 130.
[3] See Prof. Smith, *Isaiah*, p. 198.

Ashdod with my warriors, who did not separate themselves from the traces of my sandals. I besieged, I took Ashdod and Gunt-Asdodim. I then re-established these towns. I placed [in them] the people whom my arms had conquered, I put over them my lieutenant as governor. I regarded them as Assyrians, and they practised obedience."[1]

Sargon does not, however, seem to have conducted this campaign in person; for we read in Isa. xx. 1 that he sent his Turtan—*i.e.*, his commander-in-chief,[2] whose name seems to have been Zir-bâni—to Ashdod, who fought against it and took it. The wretched Philistines had put their trust in Sabaco. "The people," says Sargon, "and their evil chiefs sent their presents to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, a prince who could not save them, and besought his alliance." Isaiah had for three years been indicating how vain this policy was by one of those acted parables which so powerfully affect the Eastern mind. He had, by the word of the Lord, stripped the shoes from off his feet and the upper robe of sackcloth from his loins, and walked, "naked and barefoot, for a sign and portent against Egypt and Ethiopia," to indicate that even thus should the people of Egypt and Ethiopia be carried away as captives, naked and barefoot, by the kings of Assyria. Egypt was the boast of one party at Jerusalem, and Ethiopia, which had now become master of Egypt under Sabaco, was their expectation; but Isaiah's public self-humilia-

[1] *Records of the Past*, vii. 40. Sargon's words are, "The people of Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab were speaking treason. The people and their evil chiefs, to fight against me, unto *Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, a monarch who could not save them*, their presents carried, and besought his alliance" (G. Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, 290).

[2] On the monuments called *Turtanu*, "Holder of power." See Schrader in Riehm, *s.v.*

tion showed how utterly their hopes should come to nought.[1] Before the outbreak at Ashdod, Sargon had suppressed a revolt of Hanun, or Hanno, King of Gaza, and Egypt and Assyria first met face to face at Raphia (about B.C. 720), where Sabaco fought in person with an Egyptian contingent, at a spot half-way between Gaza and the "river of Egypt."[2] Sabaco, whom Sargon calls "the Sultan of Egypt" (Siltannu Muzri), had been defeated, and fled precipitately, but Sargon was not then sufficiently free from other complications to advance to the Nile. The hoarded vengeance of Assyria was inflicted upon Egypt nearly a century later by Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.

In the two suppressions of revolt at Ashdod, Sargon or his Turtan must have come perilously near Jerusalem, and perhaps he may have inflicted sufficient damage to admit of the boast that he had "conquered" Judæa. If so, his military vanity made him guilty of an exaggeration.

Far more serious to Sargon was the revolt of Merodach-Baladan, King of Chaldæa. Babylon had always been a rival of Nineveh in the competition for world-wide dominion, and for twelve years, as Sargon says, Merodach-Baladan had been "sending ambassadors"[3]—

[1] Raphia, or Ropeh, is on the borders of the desert. Asia beat Africa in every encounter—at Raphia, at Altaqu, at Carchemish. The impression of the seal of Shabak, attached to his capitulations with Sargon, was found at Nineveh by Sir A. H. Layard, and is now in the British Museum. Shabak died in 712. His son Shabatoh succeeded him in Egypt, and his nephew (?) Tirhakah in Ethiopia. Sabaco's name assumes many forms (LXX., Σηγώρ; Herod., ii. 137; Σαβακώς; Vulg., *Sua*). The Egyptians called him Shaba(ka).

[2] Isa. xx. 1–6.

[3] Lenormant, *Les Premières Civilisations*, ii. 203; *Records of the Past*, vii. 41–46.

to Hezekiah among others—in the patient effort to consolidate a formidable league. Elam and Media were with him; and at a solemn banquet, for which they had "spread the carpets,"[1] and eaten and drank, the cry had risen, "Arise, ye princes! anoint the shield." Standing in ideal vision on his watch-tower, Isaiah saw the sweeping rush of the Assyrian troops on their horses and camels on their way to Babylon. What should come of it? The answer is in the words, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the images of her gods he [Sargon] hath broken to the ground." Alas! there is no hope from Babylon or its embassy! Would that Isaiah could have held out a hope! But no, "O my threshed one, son of my threshing-floor, that which I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that have I declared unto you."[2] And so it came to pass. The brave Babylonian was defeated. In 709 Sargon occupied his palace, took Dur-yakin, to which he had fled for refuge, and made himself Lord Paramount as far as the Persian Gulf. It was his last great enterprise. He built and adorned his palaces, and looked forward to long years of peace and splendour; but in 705 the dagger-thrust of an assassin—a malcontent of the town of Kullum—found its way to his heart; and Sennacherib reigned in his stead.

Sennacherib—Sin-ahi-irba ("Sin, the moon-god, has

[1] Isa. xxi. 6, A.V., "Watch in the watch-tower." Hitzig, Cheyne, "They spread the carpets." Much in this short oracle (xxi. 1–10) is obscure. Isaiah seems, in denouncing the fate of Babylon, to mourn for the ruin of the smaller states of which it was the prelude (G. Smith, *Soc. of Bibl. Arch.*, ii. 320 · Kleinert, *Stud. u. Krit.*, 1877 W. R. Smith in *Enc. Brit.*, *s.v.* "Isaiah").

[2] Isa. xxi. 10—*i.e.*, "My people threshed and trodden"; LXX., ὁ καταλελειμμένος καὶ οἱ ὁδυνώμενοι; *Records of the Past*, vii. 47.

multiplied brothers")[1]—was one of the haughtiest, most splendid, and most powerful of all the kings of Assyria, though the petty state of Judah, relying on her God, defied and flouted him. The son of a mighty conqueror, at the head of a magnificent army, he regarded himself as the undisputed lord of the world.[2] Born in the purple, and bred up as crown prince, his primary characteristic was an overweening pride and arrogance, which shows itself in all his inscriptions. He calls himself "the Great King, the Powerful King, the King of the Assyrians, of the nations of the four regions, the diligent ruler, the favourite of the Great Gods, the observer of sworn faith, the guardian of law, the establisher of monuments, the noble hero, the strong warrior, the first of kings, the punisher of unbelievers, the destroyer of wicked men."[3] He was mighty both in war and peace. His warlike glories are attested by Herodotus, by Polyhistor, by Abydenus, by Demetrius, and by his own annals. His peaceful triumphs are attested by the great palace which he erected at Nineveh, and the magnificent series of sculptured slabs with which he adorned it; by his canals and aqueducts, his gateways and embankments, his Bavian sculpture, and his *stêlê* at the Nahr-el-Kelb. He was a worthy suc-

[1] Herod., Σαναχάριβος; Jos., Σεναχήριβος. See Appendix I. Sin was the moon-god; Merodach, the planet Jupiter; Adar, Saturn; Ishtai, Venus; Nebo, Mercury; Nergal, Mars (Schrader, ii. 117).

[2] Sargon seems to have been murdered in the palace of unparalleled splendour which he built at Dur-Sharrukin ("The City of Sargon"). It took him five years to build it with armies of workmen. Its halls, opened by Botta, were the first Assyrian halls ever entered by a modern's foot. It is strange that this greatest of Assyrian kings is only mentioned once in the Bible (Isa. xx. 1). We owe to Assyriology his restoration to his proper place in the annals of mankind. See Ragozin, *Assyria*, 247–254.

[3] Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, ii. 178.

cessor of his father Sargon, and of the second Tiglath-Pileser—active in his military enterprises, indefatigable, persevering, full of resource.[1]

On one of his bas-reliefs we see this magnificent potentate seated on his throne, holding two arrows in his right hand, while his left grasps the bow. A rich bracelet clasps each of his brawny arms. On his head is the jewelled pyramidal crown of Assyria, with its embroidered lappets. His dark locks stream down over his shoulders, and the long, curled beard flows over his breast. His strongly marked, sensual features wear an aspect of unearthly haughtiness. He is clad in superbly broidered robes, and his throne is covered with rich tapestries, and bas-reliefs of Assyrians or captives, who, like the Greek caryatides, uphold its divisions with their heads and arms.

Yet all this glory faded into darkness, and all this colossal pride crumbled into dust. Sennacherib not only died, like his father, by murder, but by the murderous hands of his own sons, and after the shattering of all his immense pretensions—a defeated and dishonoured man.

One of his invasions of Judæa occupies a large part of the Scripture narrative.[2] It was the fourth time of that terrible contact between the great world-power which symbolised all that was tyrannic and idolatrous, and the insignificant tribe which God had chosen for His own inheritance.

[1] Canon Rawlinson, *Kings of Israel and Judah*, 187.

[2] On his own monuments this campaign, except its final catastrophe, is narrated in four sections: (1) The subjugation of Phœnicia, and of Philistine towns; (2) the conquest of King Zidka of Askelon; (3) the defeat of Ekron, the restoration of their vassal king Padî to his throne, and the defeat of Egypt at Altaqu; (4) the expedition against Jerusalem (Schrader, E. Tr., i. 298). See Appendix I.

In the reign of Ahaz, about B.C. 732, Judah had come into collision with Tiglath-Pileser II.

Under Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon, the Northern Kingdom had ceased to exist in 722.

Under Sargon, Judah had been harassed and humbled, and had witnessed the suppression of the Philistian revolt, and of the defeat of the powerful Sabaco at Raphia about 720.

Now came the fourth and most overwhelming calamity. If the patriots of Jerusalem had placed any hopes in the disappearance of the ferocious Sargon, they must speedily have recognised that he had left behind him a no less terrible successor.

Sennacherib reigned apparently twenty-four years (B.C. 705–681). On his accession he placed a brother, whose name is unknown, on the vice-regal throne of Babylon, and contented himself with the title of King of the Assyrians. This brother was speedily dethroned by a usurper named Hagisa, who only reigned thirty days, and was then slain by the indefatigable Merodach-Baladan, who held the throne for six months. He was driven out by Belibus, who had been trained "like a little dog" in the palace of Nineveh,[1] but was now made King of Sumîr and Accad—*i.e.*, of Babylonia. Sennacherib entered the palace of Babylon and carried off the wife of Merodach and endless spoil in triumph, while Merodach fled into the land of Guzumman, and (like the Duke of Monmouth) hid himself "among the marshes and reeds," where the Assyrians searched for him for five days, but found no trace of him. After three years (702–699) Belibus proved faithless, and

[1] This allusion is said to be the only instance of humour—"*grim* humour, or it would not be Assyrian"—which occurs in the Assyrian annals.

Sennacherib made his son Assur-nadin-sum viceroy of Babylon.

His second campaign was against the Medes in Northern Elam.

His third (701) was against the Khatti (the Hittites) —*i.e.*, against Phœnicia and Palestine.[1] He drove King Luli from Sidon "by the mere terror of the splendour of my sovereignty," and placed Tubalu (*i.e.*, Ithbaal) in his place, and subdued into tributary districts Arpad, Byblos, Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, suppressing at the same time a very abortive rising in Samaria. "All these brought rich presents and kissed my feet." He also subdued Zidka, King of Askelon, from whom he took Beth-Dagon, Joppa, and other towns. Padî, the King of Ekron, was a faithful vassal of Assyria; he was therefore deposed by the revolting Ekronites, and sent in chains into the safe custody of Hezekiah, who "imprisoned him in darkness." The rebel states all relied on the Egyptians and Ethiopians. Sennacherib fought against Egyptians and Ethiopians, "in reliance upon Assur my God," at Altaqu (B.C. 701), and claims to have defeated them, and carried off the sons and charioteers of the King of Egypt, and the charioteers of the kings of Ethiopia.[2] He then tells us that he punished Altaqu and Timnath.[3] He impaled the rebels of Ekron on stakes all round the city. He restored Padî, and made him a vassal. "Hezekiah [Chazaqiahu] of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, the terror of

[1] Schrader, pp. 234–279. The account of the memorable campaign is narrated in duplicate on the Taylor Cylinder in the British Museum, and on the Bull Inscription at Kouyunjik.

[2] Sennacherib calls Tirhakah's army "a host that no man could number"; but it was defeated by the better discipline, the heavier armour, and the superior physical strength of the Assyrians.

[3] See Josh. xix. 43.

the splendour of my sovereignty overwhelmed. Himself as a bird in a cage, in the midst of Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut up. The Arabians and his dependants, whom he had introduced for the defence of Jerusalem, his royal city, together with thirty talents of gold, eight hundred of silver, bullion, precious stones, ivory couches and thrones, an abundant treasure, with his daughters, his harem, and his attendants, I caused to be brought after me to Nineveh. He sent his envoy to pay tribute and render homage." At the same time, he overran Judæa, took forty-six fenced cities and many smaller towns, "with laying down of walls, hewing about, and trampling down," and carried off more than two hundred thousand captives with their spoil. Part of Hezekiah's domains was divided among three Philistine vassals who had remained faithful to Assyria.

It was in the midst of this terrible crisis that Hezekiah had sent to Sennacherib at Lachish his offer of submission, saying, "I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest upon me I will bear."[1] The spoiling of the palace and Temple was rendered necessary to raise the vast mulct which the Assyrian King required.[2]

It is at Lachish—now Um-Lakis, a fortified hill in the Shephelah, south of Jerusalem, between Gaza and Eleutheropolis—that we catch another personal glimpse of the mighty oppressor. We see him depicted, on his triumphal tablets, in the palace-chambers of Kouyunjik,

[1] This very phrase "I imposed on them" is found on Sennacherib's monument (Schrader, ii. 1). The references, when not otherwise specified, are to Whitehouse's English translation.

[2] In 2 Kings xviii. 16 the word "pillars" or "doorposts" is uncertain. LXX., *ἐστηριγμένα*; Vulg., *laminas auri.*

engaged in the siege; for the town offered a determined resistance,[1] and required all the energies and all the trained heroism of his forces. We see him next, carefully painted, seated on his royal throne in magnificent apparel, with his tiara and bracelets, receiving the spoils and captives of the city. The inscription says: "Sennacherib, the mighty king, the king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment at the entrance of the city of Lakisha. I give permission for its slaughter." He certainly implied that he took the city, but a doubt is thrown on this by 2 Chron. xxxii. 1, which only says that "he *thought* to win these cities"; and the historian says (2 Kings xix. 8) that he "departed from Lachish." Lachish was evidently a very strong city, and it is so depicted in the palace-tablets at Kouyunjik. It had been fortified by Rehoboam, and had furnished a refuge to the wretched Amaziah.[2]

If Judah and Jerusalem had listened to the messages of Isaiah,[3] they might have been saved the humiliating affliction which seemed to have plunged the brief sun of their prosperity into seas of blood. He had warned

[1] 2 Chron. xxxii. 9. He had to besiege it "with all his power." He seems to have thought it even more important than Jerusalem, for he superintended the siege in person (Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, 150; *Monuments of Nineveh*, 2nd series, pl. 21). The ruined Tel of Umm-el-Lakis lies between the Wady Simsim and the Wady-el-Ahsy (Riehm).

[2] See 2 Chron. xi. 9, xxv. 27; Jer. xxxiv. 7. The allusion to this city in Micah (i. 13) is obscure: "O thou inhabitant of Lachish [swift steed], bind the chariot to the swift steed: she is the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee." This seems to imply that some form of idolatry had come from Israel to Lachish, and from Lachish to Jerusalem. In Sennacherib's picture of the city, foreign worship is represented as going on in it (Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh*, Pls. 21 and 24; Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, i. 477).

[3] Isa. xxix., xxx., xxxi.

them incessantly and in vain. He had foretold their present desolation, in which Zion should be like a woman seated on the ground, wailing in her despair. He had taught them that formalism was no religion, and that external rites did not win Jehovah's approval. He had told them how foolish it was to put trust in the shadow of Egypt, and had not shrunk from revealing the fearful consequences which should follow the setting up of their own false wisdom against the wisdom of Jehovah. Yet, intermingled with pictures of suffering, and threats of a harvestless year, designed to punish the vanity and display of their women, and the intimation—never actually fulfilled—that even the palace and Temple should become "the joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks," he constantly implies that the disaster would be followed by a mysterious, divine, complete deliverance, and ultimately by a Messianic reign of joy and peace. Night is at hand, he said, and darkness; but after the darkness will come a brighter dawn.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GREAT DELIVERANCE

B.C. 701

2 KINGS xix. 1—37

"There brake He the lightnings of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle."—PSALM lxxvi. 3.

"ᾠδὴ πρὸς τὸν Ασσύριον."—LXX.

"And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow at the glance of the Lord."

BYRON.

"Vuolsi cosi colà dove si puote
Cio che si vuole: e più non dimandare."

DANTE.

"Through love, through hope, through faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know."

WORDSWORTH.

"God shall help her, and that when the morning dawns."—PSALM xlvi. 5.

IN spite of the humble submission of Hezekiah, it is a surprise to learn from Isaiah that Sennacherib—after he had accepted the huge fine and fixed the tribute, and departed to subdue Lachish—broke his covenant.[1] He sent his three chief officers—the Turtan, or commander-in-chief, whose name seems to have been Belemurani;[2] the Rabsaris, or chief eunuch;[3] and the

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 8.

[2] Isa. xx. 1.

[3] Jer. xxxix 3. The meaning of the name is not certain. *Saris*, in Hebrew, is "eunuch"; but the word is not known in Assyrian records, and we should expect *Rabsarîsîm*, as in Dan. i. 3.

Rabshakeh, or chief captain[1]—from Lachish to Hezekiah, with a command of absolute, unconditional surrender, to be followed by deportation. By this conduct Sennacherib violated his own boast that he was "a keeper of treaties." Yet it is not difficult to conjecture the reason for his change of plan. He had found it no easy matter to subdue even the very minor fortress of Lachish; how unwise, then, would it be for him to leave in his rear an uncaptured city so well fortified as Jerusalem! He was advancing towards Egypt. It was obviously a strategic error to spare on his route a hostile and almost impregnable stronghold as a nucleus for the plans of his enemies. Moreover, he had heard rumours that Tirhakah, the third and last Ethiopian king of Egypt, was advancing against him, and it was most important to prevent any junction between his forces and those of Hezekiah.[2] He could not come in person to Jerusalem, for the siege of Lachish was on his hands; but he detached from his army a large contingent under his Turtan, to win the Jews by seductive promises, or to subdue Jerusalem by force. Once more, therefore, the Holy City saw beneath her often-captured walls the vast beleaguering host, and "governors and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men." Isaiah describes to us how the people crowded to the house-tops, half dead with fear, weeping and

[1] Rabsak perhaps means *chief officer* or vizier, and is Hebraised into Rabshakeh. Prof. G. A. Smith (*Isaiah*, p. 345) calls him "Sennacherib's Bismarck." Rabshakeh, usually rendered "chief cupbearer," is an Aramaised form of Rabsak (great chief); but we know of no chief cupbearer at the Assyrian court (Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 199 f.).

[2] From an Apis-stêlê he seems to have reigned twenty-six years (B.C. 694–668?).

despairing, and crying to the hills to cover them, and bereft of their rulers, who had been bound by the archers of the enemy in their attempt to escape. They gazed on the quiver-bearing warriors of Elam in their chariots, and the serried ranks of the shields of Kir, and the cavalry round the gates. And he tells us how, as so often occurs at moments of mad hopelessness, many who ought to have been crying to God in sackcloth and ashes, gave themselves up, on the contrary, to riot and revelry, eating flesh, and drinking wine, and saying: "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."[1] The king alone had shown patience, calmness, and active foresight; and he alone, by his energy and faith, had restored some confidence to the spirits of his fainting people.

Although the city had been refortified by the king, and supplied with water, the hearts of the inhabitants must have sunk within them when they saw the Assyrian army investing the walls, and when the three commissioners—taking their station "by the conduit of the upper pool which is in the highway of the fuller's field"—summoned the king to hear the ultimatum of Sennacherib.

The king did not in person obey the summons; but he, too, sent out his three chief officers. They were Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, who, as the chamberlain (*al-hab-baîth*), was a great prince (*nagîd*); Shebna, who had been degraded, perhaps at the instance of Isaiah, from the higher post, and was now secretary (*sopher*); and Joah, son of Asaph, the chronicler (*mazkîr*), to whom we probably owe the minute report of the memorable scene. No doubt they went forth in the pomp of office—Eliakim with his robe, and girdle, and

[1] Isa. xxii. 1-13.

key.[1] The Rabshakeh proved himself, indeed, "an affluent orator," and evinced such familiarity with the religious politics of Judah and Jerusalem, that this, in conjunction with his perfect mastery of Hebrew, gives colour to the belief that he was an apostate Jew. He began by challenging the idle confidence of Hezekiah, and his vain words[2] that he had counsel and strength for the war. Upon what did he rely? On the broken and dangerous bulrush of Egypt?[3] It would but pierce his hand! On Jehovah? But Hezekiah had forfeited his protection by sweeping away His *bamoth* and His altars! Why, let Hezekiah make a wager;[4] and if Sennacherib furnished him with two thousand horses, he would be unable to find riders for them! How, then, could he drive back even the lowest of the Assyrian captains? And was not Jehovah on their side? It was He who had bidden them destroy Jerusalem!

That last bold assertion, appealing as it did to all that was erroneous and abject in the minds of the superstitious, and backed, as it was, by the undeniable force of the envoy's argument, smote so bitterly on the ear of Hezekiah's courtiers, that they feared it would render negotiation impossible. They humbly entreated the orator to speak to "his servants" in the Aramaic language of Assyria, which they understood,[5] and not in Hebrew, which was the language of all the Jews who stood in crowds on the walls. Surely this was

[1] Eliakim. See Isa. xxii. 21, 22.

[2] "Vain words"; lit., "a word of the lips." LXX., λόγοι χειλέων.

[3] Comp. Isa. xxx. 1–7; Ezek. xxix. 6. It seems to be an over-refinement to suppose that Sennacherib refers to the divisions between Egypt and Ethiopia.

[4] 2 Kings xviii. 23, A.V.: "Let Hezekiah give pledges."

[5] Heb., *Arâmith.*

a diplomatic embassy to their king, not an incitement to popular sedition?

The answer of the Rabshakeh was truly Assyrian in its utterly brutal and ruthless coarseness. Taking up his position directly in front of the wall,[1] and ostentatiously addressing the multitude, he ignored the representatives of Hezekiah. Who were they? asked he. His master had not sent him to speak to them, or to their poor little puppet of a king, but to the people on the wall, the foul garbage of whose sufferings of thirst and famine they should share.[2] And to all the multitude the great king's[3] message was:—Do not be deceived. Hezekiah cannot save you. Jehovah will not save you. Come to terms with me, and give me hostages and pledges and a present, and then live in happy peace and plenty until I come and deport you to a land as fair and fruitful as this. How should Jehovah deliver them? Had any of the gods of the nations delivered them out of the hands of the King of Assyria? "Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have the gods of Samaria delivered Samaria out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"[4]

It was a very powerful oration, but the orator must have been a little disconcerted to find that it was listened to in absolute silence. He had disgracefully

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 28, where *stood* should be rendered *came forward.*

[2] The coarse expression is softened down by the Chronicler (2 Chron. xxxii. 18).

[3] The kings of Assyria usually called themselves "great king, mighty king, king of the multitude, king of the land Assur."

[4] Every one must notice the glaring inconsistency between this *defiance* of Jehovah and the previous claim to the possession of His sanction. On Hamath, Arpad, etc., see Schrader, ii. 7–10.

violated the comity of international intercourse by appealing to subjects against their lawful king; yet from the starving people there came not a murmur of reply. Faithful to the behest of their king in the midst of their misery and terror, they answered not a word. Agamemnon is silent before the coarse jeers of Thersites. "The sulphurous flash dies in its own smoke, only leaving a hateful stench behind it!" And in this attitude of the people there was something very sublime and very instructive. Dumb, stricken, starving, the wretched Jews did not answer the envoy's taunts or menaces, because they would not. They were not even in those extremities to be seduced from their allegiance to the king whom they honoured, though the speaker had contemptuously ignored his existence. And though the Rabshakeh had cut them to the heart with his specious appeals and braggart vaunts, yet "this clever, self-confident, persuasive personage, with two languages on his tongue, and an army at his back," could not shake the confidence in God, which, however unreasonable it might seem, had been elevated into a conviction by their king and their prophet. The Rab-sak had tried to seduce the people into rebellion, but he had failed.[1] They were ready to die for Hezekiah with the fidelity of despair. The mirage of sensual comfort in exiled servitude should not tempt them from the scorched wilderness from which they could still cry out for the living God.

Yet the Assyrian's words had struck home into the hearts of his greatest hearers, and therefore how much more into those of the ignorant multitudes! Eliakim

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 8: "He hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man."

and Shebna and Joah came to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh. And when the king heard it, when he found that even his submission had been utterly in vain, he too rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth,[1] and went into the only place where he could hope to find comfort, even into the house of the Lord, which he had cleansed and restored to beauty, although afterwards he had been driven to despoil it. Needing an earthly counsellor, he sent Eliakim and Shebna and the elders of the priests to Isaiah. They were to tell him the outcome of this day of trouble, rebuke, and contumely; and since the Rabshakeh had insulted and despised Jehovah, they were to urge the prophet to make his appeal to Him, and to pray for the remnant which the Assyrians had left.[2]

The answer of Isaiah was a dauntless defiance. If others were in despair, he was not in the least dismayed. "Be not afraid"—such was his message—"of the mere words with which the boastful boys of the King of Assyria have blasphemed Me.[3] Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumour,[4] and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

Much crestfallen at the total and unexpected failure of the embassy, and of his own heart-shaking appeals, the Rabshakeh returned. But meanwhile Sennacherib had taken Lachish, and marched to Libnah (Tel-es-

[1] 1 Kings xx. 32; 2 Kings vi. 30.

[2] Sennacherib had already carried off vast numbers. See Isa. xxiv. 1-12; Demetrius *ap.* Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, i. 403.

[3] Isaiah's phrase, ***na'arî melek***, "lads of the king," is contemptuous. LXX., παιδάρια.

[4] Heb., ***ruach***; LXX., δίδωμι ἐν αὐτῷ πνεῦμα. Theodoret calls this "spirit" *cowardice* (τὴν δειλίαν οἶμαι δηλοῦν).

Safîa), which he was now besieging.[1] There it was that he heard the "rumour" of which Isaiah had spoken—the report, namely, that Tirhakah, the third king of the Ethiopian dynasty of Pharaohs,[2] was advancing in person to meet him. This was B.C. 701, and it is perhaps only by anticipation that Tirhakah is called "King" of Ethiopia. He was only the general and representative of his father Shabatok, if (as some think) he did not succeed to the throne till 698.

It was impossible for Sennacherib under these circumstances to return northwards to Jerusalem, of which the siege would inevitably occupy some time. But he sent a menacing letter,[3] reminding Hezekiah that neither king nor god had ever yet saved any city from the hands of the Assyrian destroyers. Where were the kings, he asked again, of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, Ivvah? What had the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the children of Eden in Telassar done to save their countries from Sennacherib's ancestors, when they had laid them under the ban?[4]

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[1] Libnah means "whiteness." Dean Stanley (*S. and P.*, 207, 258) identifies it with a white-faced hill, the Blanchegarde of the Crusaders.

[2] The dates usually given are Sabaco, B.C. 725–712; Shabatok, 712–698; Tirhakah, 698–672. Manetho, Τάραχος; Strabo, Τεράκων, ὁ Αἰθιώψ. He was third king of the twenty-fifth dynasty, and the greatest of the Egyptian sovereigns who came from Ethiopia. He reigned gloriously for many years. We see his figure at Medinet Abou, smiting ten captive princes with an iron mace; but he was finally defeated by Esarhaddon, and in 668 by Assurbanipal at Karbanit (Canopus). He is called by his conqueror "Tar-ku-u, King of Egypt and Cush" (Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 336 ff.).

[3] Heb., *Sepharîm*; Vulg., *litteræ*; 2 Chron. xxxii. 17. The more ordinary term for a letter is *iggereth*.

[4] 2 Kings xix. 12 (Heb.); Ezek. xxvii. 23. On these places see Schrader, ii. 11, 12. It had been indeed Sennacherib's work "to

Again the pious king found comfort in God's Temple. Taking with him the scornful and blasphemous letter, he spread it out before Jehovah in the Temple with childlike simplicity, that Jehovah might read its insults and be moved by this dumb appeal.[1] Then both he and Isaiah cried mightily to God, "who sitteth above the cherubim," admitting the truth of what Sennacherib had said, and that the kings of Assyria had destroyed the nations, and burnt their vain gods in the fire. But of what significance was that? Those were but gods of wood and stone, the works of men's hands.[2] But Jehovah was the One, the True, the Living God. Would He not manifest among the nations His eternal supremacy?

And as the king prayed the word of Jehovah came to Isaiah, and he sent to Hezekiah this glorious message about Sennacherib:—

"The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee."[3]

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reduce fenced cities to ruinous heaps." He boasts on the Bellino Cylinder, "Their smaller towns without number I overthrew, and reduced them to heaps of rubbish" (*Records of the Past*, i. 27).

[1] "It is a prayer without words, a prayer in action, which then passes into a spoken prayer" (Delitzsch).

[2] The Assyrians are sometimes represented in their monuments as hewing idols to pieces in honour of their god Assur (Botta, *Monum.*, pl. 140).

[3] LXX., *κινεῖν τὴν κεφαλήν*, "a gesture of scorn" (Psalm xxii. 7, cix. 25; Lam. ii. 15). With the vaunts of Sennacherib compare Claudian, *De bell. Geth.*, 526–532.

> "Cum cesserit omnis
> Obsequiis natura meis? Subsidere nostris
> Sub pedibus montes, *arescere vidimus amnes* . . .
> Fregi Alpes, *galeis Padum victricibus hausi.*"
>
> KEIL, *ad loc.*

The blasphemies, the vaunts, the menacing self-confidence of Sennacherib, were his surest condemnation. Did he count God a cypher? It was to God alone that he owed the fearful power which had made the nations like grass upon the housetops, like blasted corn, before him. And because God knew his rage and tumult, God would treat him as Sargon his father had treated conquered kings:—

"I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips.[1] And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." He had thought to conquer Egypt:[2] instead of that he should be driven back in confusion to Assyria.

It was but a plainer enunciation of the truths which Isaiah had again and again intimated in enigma and parable. It was the fearless security of Judah's lion; the safety of the rock amid the deluge; the safety of the poor brood under the wings of the Divine protection from "the great Birds'-nester of the world"; the crashing downfall of the lopped Lebanonian cedar, while the green shoot and tender branch out of the withered stump of Jesse should take root downward and bear fruit upward.[3]

And the sign was given to Hezekiah that this should be so.[4] This year there should be no harvest, except

[1] Comp. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11 (Heb.); Psalm xxxix. 1; Isa. xxx. 28; Ezek. xxxviii. 4, xxix. 4. The Assyrians drove a ring through the lower lip, the Babylonians through the nose. See Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, ii. 314, iii. 436.

[2] 2 Kings xix. 33. "The river of Egypt" (*Nachal-ha-Mizraim*) is the Wady-el-Arish.

[3] Isa. x. 33, 34, xi. 1, xiv. 8; Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 410.

[4] אוֹת. A sign "is a thing, an event, or an action intended as a pledge of the Divine certainty of another. Sometimes it is a miracle (Gen. iv. 15, Heb.), or a permanent symbol (Isa. viii. 18, xx. 3, xxxvii 30; Jer. xliv. 29)" (Delitzsch).

such as was spontaneous; for in the stress of Assyrian invasion sowing and reaping had been impossible. The next year the harvest should only be from this accidental produce. But in the third year, secure at last, they should sow and reap, and plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof.[1] And though but a remnant of the people was left out of the recent captivity, they should grow and flourish, and Jerusalem should see the besieging host of Assyria no more for ever; for Jehovah would defend the city for His own sake, and for His servant David's sake.

Thereafter occurred the great deliverance.[2] In some way—we know not and never shall know how—by a blast of the simoom, or sudden outburst of plague, or furious panic, or sudden assault, or by some other calamity,[3] the host of Assyria was smitten in the camp, and one hundred and eighty-five thousand, including their chief leaders, perished. The historian, in a manner habitual to pious Semitic writers, attributes the devastation to the direct action of "the angel of the Lord";[4] but as Dr. Johnson said long ago, "We are certainly not to suppose that the angel went about

[1] The first year they should eat *saphîach* (LXX., *αὐτόματα*; Vulg., *quæ repereris*); the second year, *sachîsh* (LXX., *τὰ ἀναπέλλοντα*; Vulg., *quæ sponte nascuntur*).

[2] 2 Kings xix. 35: "It came to pass that night." Isaiah only has "then"; Josephus, *κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τῆς πολιορκίας νύκτα*. Menochius understands it "*in celebri illa nocte*." The LXX. omits "that," and simply says "in the night" (*νυκτός*). Comp. Psalm xlvi. 5 (Heb.); Isa. xvii. 14.

[3] Josephus, followed by many moderns, and even by Keil, suggests a plague. The malaria of the Pelusiotic marshes easily breeds pestilence. The "*maleak Jehovah*" is "the destroyer" (*mashchîth*) (Exod. xii. 23; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. Comp. Justin., xix. 11; Diod. Sic., xix. 434.

[4] Comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16.

with a sword in his hand, striking them one by one, but that some powerful natural agent was employed."[1]

The Forty-Sixth Psalm is generally regarded as the *Te Deum* sung in the Temple over this deliverance, and its opening words, "God is our refuge and strength," are inscribed over the cathedral of St. Sophia at Constantinople.

It is usually supposed that this overwhelming disaster happened to the host of Assyria *before Jerusalem.* This, however, is not stated; and as the capture of Lachish was an urgent necessity, it is probable that the Turtan led back the forces which had accompanied him, and took them afterwards to Libnah.[2] Yet, since Libnah was but ten miles from Jerusalem, the Jews could not feel safe for a day until the mighty news came that the

> "Angel of God spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed,
> And the eyes of the sleepers waxed heavy and chill,
> And their breasts but once heaved, and for ever grew still."

When the catastrophe which had happened to the main army and the flight of Sennacherib became known, the scattered forces would melt away.

All the Assyrians who escaped were now hurrying back[3] to Nineveh with their foiled king. Sennacherib

[1] The Babyl. Talmud and some Targums, followed by Vitringa, etc., attribute to it storms of lightning; Prideaux, Heine, and Faber, to the simoom; R. José, Ussher, etc., to a nocturnal attack of Tirhakah.

[2] It is, however, perfectly possible that a contingent was left on guard. "Where is the [past] terror? Where is he that rated the tribute? Where is he that received it?" (Isa. xxxiii. 18). "At the noise of the tumult the people flee" (Isa. xxxiii. 3); "At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep" (Psalm lxxvi. 6). Comp. Psalm xlviii. 4–6.

[3] This is the meaning of "he departed, and went, and returned."

seems to have occupied himself in the north, except so far as he was forced to fight fiercely against his own rebel subjects. He never recovered this complete humiliation. He never again came southwards. He survived the catastrophe for seventeen or twenty years,[1] and fought five or six campaigns; but at the end of that period, while he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch or Assarac (Assur), his god,[2] he was murdered by his two sons Adrammelech (Adar-malik—"Adar is king") and Sharezer (Nergal-sarussar—"Nergal protect the king"),[3] who envied him his throne. They escaped into the land of Ararat, but were defeated and killed by their younger brother Esarhaddon (Assur-âkh-iddin —"Assur bestowed a 'brother'") at the battle of Hani-Rabbat, on the Upper Euphrates. He succeeded Sennacherib, and ultimately avenged on Egypt his father's overwhelming disaster. He is perhaps the "cruel lord" of Isa. xix. 4, and it is not unnatural that he should have prevailed against his parricidal brothers, for we are told that in a previous battle at Melitene he had shown such prowess that the troops then and there proclaimed him King of Assyria with shouts of "This is our king."[4] He reigned from B.C.

[1] Not, only fifty-five days, as we read in Tobit i. 21.

[2] Jos., *Antt.*, X. i. 5: "In his own temple to Araskê"; LXX., Ἀσαράχ; Isa. xxxvii. 38. One guess connects the word with Nesher, "the eagle-god," often seen on the Assyrian bas-reliefs. Lenormant calls him "the god of human destiny."

[3] Alex. Polyhistor *ap.* Euseb., i. 27; Kimchi *ad* 2 Kings xix. 37. Buxtorf (*Bibl. Rabbinic.*) says that Sennacherib entered the temple to ask his counsellors why Jehovah favoured Israel. Being told that it was because of Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac, he said, "Then I will offer my two sons." Rashi adds that they slew him to save their own lives. (See Schenkel and Riehm, *s.v.* "Sanherib" —both articles by Schrader).

[4] See Schrader in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, *s.vv.* "Sanherib,"

681–668, and in his reign Assyria culminated before her last decline.[1] He was the builder of the temple at Nimrûd, and erected thirty other temples. Babylon and Nineveh were both his capitals,[2] and he had previously been viceroy of the former.

The glorious deliverance in which the faith and courage of the King of Judah had had their share naturally increased the prosperity and prestige of Hezekiah, and lifted the authority of Isaiah to an unprecedented height. Hezekiah probably did not long survive the uplifting of this dark cloud, but during the remainder of his life "he was magnified in the sight of all nations."[3] When he died, all Judah and Jerusalem did him honour, and gave him a splendid burial. Apparently the old tombs of the kings—the catacomb constructed by David and Solomon—had in the course of two and a half centuries become full, so that he had to be buried "in the ascent of the sepulchres," perhaps some niche higher than the other graves of the catacomb, which was henceforth disused for the burial of the kings of Judah. We have had occasion to observe the many particulars in which his reign was memorable, and to his other services must be added the literary activity to which we owe the collection and editing, by his scribes, of the Proverbs of Solomon. His reign had practically witnessed the institution of the faithful

"Asarhaddon." Esarhaddon, judging from what is called "Sennacherib's will," in which the king leaves him splendid presents, seems to have been a favourite of his father (*Records of the Past*, i. 136). He says that on hearing of his father's murder, "I was wrathful as a lion, and my soul raged within me, and I lifted my hands to the great gods to assume the sovereignty of my father's house." See Appendix I.

[1] The Book of Tobit (i. 21) calls him Sarchedonas.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxii. 23.

Jewish Church under the influence of his great prophetic guide.[1]

The question whether the portent of the destruction of the Assyrian was identical with that related by Herodotus has never been finally answered. Herodotus places the scene of the disaster at Pelusium,[2] and tells this story:—Sennacherib, King of the Arabs and Assyrians, invaded Egypt. Its king, Sethos, of the Tanite dynasty, in despair entered the temple of his god Pthah (or Vulcan), and wept.[3] The god appeared to him with promises of deliverance, and Sethos marched to meet Sennacherib with an army of poor artisans, since he was a priest, and the caste of warriors was ill-affected to him. In the night the god Pthah sent hosts of field-mice, which gnawed the quivers, bow-strings, and shield-straps of the Assyrians, who consequently fled, and were massacred. An image of the priest-king with a mouse in his hand stood in the temple of Pthah, and on its pedestal the inscription, which might also point the moral of the Biblical narrative, Ἐς ἐμέ τις ὁρεῶν εὐσεβὴς ἔστω ("Let him who looks on me be pious"). Josephus seems so far to accept this version that he refers to Herodotus, and says that Sennacherib's failure was the result of a frustration in Egypt.[4] The *mouse* in the hand of the statue probably originated the details of the legend; but according to Horapollion it was the hieroglyphic

[1] Wellhausen, p. 116.

[2] Herod., ii. 14. "Sin" (Tanis?), Ezek. xxx. 15. It lay in the midst of morasses, and some attribute the catastrophe to the malaria.

[3] The deliverance is really connected with Tirhakah, whose deeds are recorded in a temple at Medinet Habou, but the jealousy of the Memphites attributed it to the piety of Sethos. See G. W. Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, i. 141; Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, i. 394.

[4] *Antt.*, X. i. 1–5.

sign of destruction by plague.[1] Bähr says that it was also the symbol of Mars. Readers of Homer will remember the title Apollo *Smintheus* ("the destroyer of mice"), and the story that mice were worshipped in the Troas because they gnawed the bow-strings of the enemy.

But whatever may have been the mode of the retribution, or the scene in which it took place, it is certainly historical. The outlines of the narrative in the sacred historian are identical with those in the Assyrian records. The annals of Sennacherib tell us the four initial stages of the great campaign in the conquest of Phœnicia, of Askelon, and of Ekron, the defeat of the Egyptians at Altaqu, and the earlier hostilities against Hezekiah. The Book of Kings concentrates our attention on the details of the close of the invasion. On this point, whether from accident, or because Sennacherib did not choose to register his own calamity, and the frustration of the gods of whose protection he boasted, the Assyrian records are silent. Baffled conquerors rarely dwell on their own disasters. It is not in the despatches of Napoleon that we shall find the true story of his abandonment of Syria, of the defeats of his forces in Spain, or of his retreat from Moscow.[2]

The great lesson of the whole story is the reward and the triumph of indomitable faith. Faith may still burn with a steady flame when the difficulties around it seem insuperable, when all refutation of the attacks

[1] Comp. 1 Sam. v., vi., where, after a plague, the Philistines sent an expiation of five golden mice.

[2] We may add that even the Chronicler drops a veil over Sennacherib's actual capture of fortresses in Judah ("he *thought* to win them for himself," 2 Chron. xxxii. 1: comp. 2 Kings xviii. 13; Isa. xxxvi. 1).

of its enemies seems to be impossible, when Hope itself has sunk into white ashes in which scarcely a gleam of heat remains. Isaiah had nothing to rely upon; he had no argument wherewith to furnish Hezekiah beyond the bare and apparently unmeaning promise, "Jehovah is our Judge; Jehovah is our Lawgiver; Jehovah is our King. He will save us." It was a magnificent vindication of his inspired conviction, when all turned out—not indeed in minute details, but in every essential fact—exactly as he had prophesied from the first. Even in B.C. 740 he had declared that the sins of Judah deserved and would receive condign punishment, though a remnant should be saved.[1] That the retribution would come from some foreign enemy—Assyria or Egypt, or both—he felt sure. Jehovah would hiss for the fly in the uttermost canals of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria, and both should swarm in the crevices of the rocks, and over the pastures.[2] Later on in 732, in the reign of Ahaz, he pointed to Assyria,[3] as the destined scourge, and he realised this still more clearly in 725 and 721, when Shalmaneser and Sargon were tearing Samaria to pieces.[4] Contrary, indeed, to his expectation, the Assyrians did not then destroy Jerusalem, or even formally besiege it. The revolt from Assyria, the reliance on Egypt, did not for a moment blind his judgment or alter his conviction; and in 701 it came true when Sennacherib was on the march for Palestine.[5] Yet he never wavered in the apparently impossible conclusion, that, in spite of all, in spite even of his own darker prophecies (xxxii. 14), Jerusalem shall in some Divine

[1] Isa. vi. 11–13.
[2] Isa. v. 26–30.
[3] Isa. vii. 18.
[4] Isa. viii., xxviii. 1–15, x. 28–34.
[5] Isa. xiv. 29–32, xxix., xxx.

manner be saved.[1] The deliverance would be, as he declared from first to last, the work of Jehovah, not the work of man,[2] and because of it Sennacherib would return to his own land and perish there.[3] The details might be dim and wavering; the result was certain. Isaiah was no thaumaturge, no peeping wizard, no muttering necromancer, no monthly prognosticator.[4] He was a prophet—that is, an inspired moral and spiritual teacher who was able to foresee and to foretell, not in their details, but in their broad outlines, the events yet future, because he was enabled to read them by the eye of faith ere they had yet occurred. His faith convinced him that predictions founded on eternal principles have all the certainty of a law, and that God's dealings with men and nations in the future can be seen in the light of experience derived from the history of the past. Courage, zeal, unquenchable hope, indomitable resolution, spring from that perfect confidence in God which is the natural reward of innocence and faithfulness. Isaiah trusted in God, and he knew that they who put their trust in Him can never be confounded.

No event produced a deeper impression on the minds of the Jews, though that impression was soon afterwards, for a time, obliterated. Naturally, it elevated the authority of Isaiah into unquestioned pre-eminence during the reign of Hezekiah. It has left its echo, not only in his own triumphant pæans, but also in the Forty-Sixth Psalm, which the Septuagint calls "An ode to the Assyrian," and perhaps also in the Seventy-Fifth and

[1] Isa. i. 19, 20.

[2] Isa. x. 33, xxix. 5–8, xxx. 20–26, 30–33.

[3] Isa. xxxviii. 6. See for this paragraph an admirable chapter in Prof. Smith's *Isaiah*, pp. 368–374.

[4] Isa. xlvii. 13.

Seventy-Sixth Psalms. In the minds of all faithful Israelites it established for ever the conviction that God had chosen Judah for Himself, and Israel for His own possession; that God was in the midst of Zion, and she should not be confounded: "God shall help her, and that right early." And it contains a noble and inspiring lesson for all time. "It is not without reason," says Dean Stanley, "that in the Churches of Moscow the exultation over the fall of Sennacherib is still read on the anniversary of the retreat of the French from Russia, or that Arnold, in his lectures on Modern History, in the impressive passage in which he dwells on that great catastrophe, declared that for the memorable night of the frost in which twenty thousand horses perished, and the strength of the French army was utterly broken, he knew of no language so well fitted to describe it as the words in which Isaiah described the advance and destruction of the hosts of Sennacherib."[1]

They had been brought face to face, the two kings—Sennacherib and Hezekiah. One was the impious boaster who relied on his own strength, and on the mighty host which dried up rivers with their trampling march—the worldling who thought to lord it over the affrighted globe; the other was the poor kinglet of the Chosen People, with his one city and his enfeebled people, and his dominion not so large as one of the smallest English counties. But "one with God is irresistible," "one with God is always in a majority." The poor, weak prince triumphs over the terrific conqueror, because he trusts in Him to whom world-desolating tyrants are but as the small dust of the

[1] Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 531.

balance, and who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing."[1]

As Assyria now vanishes almost entirely from the history of the Chosen People, we may here recall with delight one large and loving prophecy, to show that the Hebrews were sometimes uplifted by the power of inspiration above the narrowness of a bigoted and exclusive spirit. Desperately as Israel had suffered, both from Egypt and Assyria, Isaiah could still utter the glowing Messianic Prophecy which included the Gentiles in the privileges of the Golden Age to come. He foretold that—

"In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, as a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance."[2]

"That strain I heard was of a higher mood!"

King Hezekiah can have no finer panegyric than that of the son of Sirach: "Even the kings of Judah failed, for they forsook the law of the Most High: all except David, and Ezekias, and Josias failed."[3]

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[1] Isa. xl. 15. [2] Isa. xix. 24, 25. [3] Ecclus. xlix. 4.

CHAPTER XXIX

MANASSEH

B.C. 686—641

2 KINGS xxi. 1—16

"Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with Thee,
That frameth mischief by statute?
They gather themselves in troops against the soul of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood."—PSALM xciv. 20, 21.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience long He waiteth, with exactness grinds He all."

MANASSEH was born after Hezekiah's recovery from his terrible illness. He was but twelve years old when he began to reign. Of his mother Hephzibah we know nothing, nor of the Zechariah who was her father; but perhaps Isaiah in one passage (lxii. 4) may refer to her name, "My delight is in her."[1] The son of Hezekiah and Hephzibah was the worst of all the kings of Judah, and had the longest reign.

The tender age of Manasseh when he came to the throne may perhaps account for the fact that the

[1] One legend says that Hephzibah was a daughter of Isaiah. Not so Josephus (*Antt.*, X. iii. 1).

"forgetfulness" which his name implied[1] was not a forgetting of other sorrows, but of all that was noble and righteous in the attempted reformation which had been the main religious work of his father's life. In Judah, as in England, a king was not supposed to be of age until he was eighteen.[2] For six years Manasseh must have been to a great extent under the influence of his regents and counsellors.

There always existed in Jerusalem, even in the best times, a heathenising party, and it was, unfortunately, composed of princes and aristocrats who could bring strong influence to bear upon the king.[3] They did not deny Jehovah, but they did not recognise Him as the sole or the supreme God of heaven and earth. To them He was the local deity of Israel and Judah. But there were other gods, the gods of the nations, and their aim always was to recognise the existence of these deities and to pay homage to their power. If their favour could not be purchased except by their immediate votaries, at least their anger might be averted. These politicians advocated a fatal and incongruous syncretism, or at least an unlimited tolerance for heathen idols, for which they could, unhappily, quote the precepts and example of the Wise King, Solomon. If any one questioned their views as a dangerous idolatry, and an insult to

> "Jehovah thundering out of Zion, throned
> Between the cherubim,"

[1] See Gen. xli. 51. His name may have referred to the new union between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Comp. 2 Chron. xxx. 6, xxxi. 1.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1–3.

[3] See Zeph. i. 8. Comp. 2 Chron. xxiv. 17; Isa. xxviii. 14; Jer. v. 5, etc.

they had but to point from the walls of Jerusalem to tne confronting summit of Olivet, where still remained the shrines which the son of David had erected three centuries earlier to Chemosh, and Milcom, and Ashtoreth, who, since his day, had always found, even in Jerusalem, some worshippers, open or secret, to acknowledge their divinity.

And these worldlings, in their tolerance for the intolerable, could always appeal to two powerful instincts of man's fallen nature—sensuality and fear—"lust hard by hate." There was something in the worship of Baal-Peor and of Moloch which appealed to the undying ape and tiger in the unregenerate human heart.

The true worship of Jehovah is exactly that form of religion which man finds it least easy to render to Him—the religion of pure morality. Services, rites, functions, look like religious diligence, and readily secure a reverent outward devotion. Even self-maceration, fasts, and flagellation are a cheap way of escaping the "endless torments" which always loom so hugely in terrifying superstition.

Such superstitions are children of the fear and faithlessness which hath torment. They are the corruptions with which every form of false religion, and with which also a corrupt and perverted Christianity, are always tainted. And they demand the easy expiation of physical ritual. But all the best and most spiritual teachers of Scripture—alike the Hebrew Prophets and the Christian Apostles—are at one with the Lord Christ in perpetual insistence on the truth that "mercy is better than sacrifice," and that true religion consists in that good mind and good life which are the sole proof of genuine sincerity.

If Jehovah would but be contented with gifts, men would gladly offer Him thousands of rams and tens of thousands of rivers of oil. But the prophets taught that He was above all mean bribes, and that such offerings never could be anything to One whose were all the beasts of the forests and the cattle upon a thousand hills. It was not easy, then, to bribe such a God, or to make Him a respecter of persons.

How easy, again, would it be, if He would even accept human sacrifices! A child was but a child. How easy to kill a child, and place it in the brazen arms which sloped over the fiery cistern! Moloch and Chemosh were supremely to be won by such holocausts; and surely Moloch and Chemosh must be lords of power! But here again the prophets of Jehovah stepped in, and said that it was of no avail with the High, the Holy, the Merciful, to give even our first-born for our transgressions, or the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul.

Asceticism, then—occasional fasting, severe self-deprivations—surely the gods would accept these? And they were as nothing compared to the burden of sin and the agony of conscience! Baal and Asherah could command agonised devotees, and could approve of them. By Jehovah and His prophets such bodily service is discouraged and forbidden.

Pleasure, then?—the consecration of the natural impulses, the devotion in religious cultus of the passions and appetites of the flesh—why should that be so abhorrent to Jehovah? Other deities exulted in licentiousness. Was not the temple of Astarte full of her women-worshippers and of her eunuchs? Was there no fascination in the voluptuous allurements, the orgiastic dances, the stolen waters, the bread eaten in

secret, when not only was the conscience lulled by the removal therefrom of all sense of guilt and degradation, but such orgies were even crowned with merit, as part of an acceptable worship? After all, there was "a fascination of corruption" in these idols of gold and jewels, of lust and blood!

How stern, how cold, how bare, by comparison, was the moral law which only said, "Thou shalt not," and emphasised its prohibition with the unalterable sanctions, "This do, and thou shalt live"; "Do it not, and thou shalt die"! What could they make of a religion which was so eloquently silent as to the meritoriousness of ritual?

And how chill and simple and dreary was that which —according to Micah—Jehovah had shown to be good, and which He required of every man,—which was nothing more than to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God!

And what right had the prophets—so asked these apostates—to lord it over God's heritage in this way? Solomon was the greatest king of Israel and Judah; and Solomon had never been so exclusive in his religionism, though he had built the Temple of the Lord; nor Rehoboam; nor the great Phœnician Queen Athaliah; nor the cultivated and æsthetic Ahaz; nor, in the kingdom of Israel, the lordly warrior Ahab; nor the splendid and long-lived victor Jeroboam II. Had not Manasseh plenty of examples of religious syncretism, to which he might appeal in the joy of his youthful age?

Not impossibly there lay in the background another reason why the young king might be inclined to listen to these evil counsellors. Micah may still have been living; but of Isaiah we hear no more. Probably he was dead. It is not recorded that he delivered any

prophecy during the reign of Manasseh, nor is it certain that he outlived the former king. Tradition, indeed, in later days, asserted that he had confronted Manasseh, and been doomed to death; that he had taken refuge in a cedar tree, and in that cedar had been sawn asunder; but the tradition is wholly without a vestige of authority. One of Micah's sternest oracles was perhaps uttered in the days of Manasseh.[1] But Micah was only a provincial prophet of Moresheth-Gath. He never moved in the midst of princes as Isaiah had done, or possessed a tithe of the authority which had rested for so many years on the shoulders of his mighty contemporary.

Moreover—so the heathen party might suggest—had not Isaiah's prophecies been falsified by the result? Had he not distinctly promised and pledged his credit to two things? and had not both turned out to be unworthy of reliance?

i. Surely he had prophesied the utter downfall of the Assyrians. And it was true that after his disaster on the confines of Egypt, Sennacherib had fled in haste to Nineveh, and his occupations with rebels on his own frontiers had left Judah unmolested, and he had been murdered by his sons. But, on the other hand, in no sense of the word had Assyria fallen. On the contrary, she had never been more powerful. Not one of his predecessors had seemed more irresistible than Esarhaddon. He was undisputed king of Babylon and of Nineveh. There would be no more embassies from Merodach-Baladan, or any revolted viceroy! And rumour would early begin to narrate that Esarhaddon had not forgotten the catastrophe at Pelusium, but

[1] Mic. vii. 1–20.

intended to avenge it, and to teach Egypt the forgotten lessons of Raphia (B.C. 720) and Altaqu (B.C. 701).

ii. And as for Judah, where was the golden Messianic age which Isaiah had promised? Where did they see the Divine Prince whom he had foretold, or the lion lying down with the lamb, and the child laying his hand on the cockatrice's den?

All this, they would argue, had greatly shaken Isaiah's prophetic authority. Judah was a mere vassal —safe only in so far as she remained a vassal, and did not join Tyre or any other rebellious power, but abode safe under the shadow of Assyria's mighty wings.

Was it not, then, as well to look facts in the face? to accept things as they were? And—so they would argue, with false plausibility—since the triumph, after all, had remained with the gods of the nations, might it not be as well to dethrone Jehovah from His exclusive dominion, and at least to propitiate the potent and less-exacting deities, the charming *Dî faciles* who smiled at lewd aberrations, and even flung over them the glamour of devotion?

With these bolder renegades would be the whole body of the priests of the *bamoth*. Those old sanctuaries had been repressed by Hezekiah without any compensation; for in those days life-interests were little, or not at all, regarded. Multitudes of priests and Levites must have been flung out of employment and reduced to poverty by the recent religious revolution. It is not likely that they bore without a murmur the obliteration of forms of worship sanctioned by immemorial custom, or that they made no efforts to procure the re-establishment of what the people loved.

Thus a vast weight of evil influence was brought to bear upon the boy-king; and it was also the more

powerful because repeated indications exist that, while the king was nominally a despot, and was surrounded with external observance, the real control of affairs was, to a large extent, in the hands of an aristocracy of priests and princes, except when the king was a man of great personal force.

Manasseh went over to these retrogressionists heart and soul, and he contentedly remained a tributary of Assyria. Even when Esarhaddon's forces marched to the chastisement of Egypt, he felt secure in his allegiance to the dominant tyrant of Babylon and Nineveh, whose interest it would be not to disturb a faithful subject.

There followed a reaction, an absolute rebound from the old monotheistic strictness and righteousness. The nation emancipated itself from the moral law as with a shout of relief, and plunged into superstition and licentiousness. The reign of Manasseh resembled at once the recrudescence of Popery in the reign of Mary Tudor, with its rekindling of the fires of Smithfield, and the foul orgies of debauchery at the Restoration of 1660, when human nature, loving degraded licence better than strenuous liberty, flung away the noble freedom of Puritanism for the loathly mysteries of Cotytto. The age of Manasseh resembled that of Charles II., in the famous description of Lord Macaulay. "Then came days never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. In every high place worship was paid to Belial and Moloch, and England propitiated these obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children." Sensuous intoxication is in all cases closely connected with

fiendish cruelty, and the introducer of voluptuous idolatries naturally became the first persecutor of the true religion.

1. The first step of the king, and probably the one which the people welcomed most, was the restoration of the chapelries under the trees and on the hills, which, more strenuously than any of his predecessors, Hezekiah had at least attempted to put down. For this step Manasseh might have pleaded the sanction of ages to which the Book of Deuteronomy had either been wholly unknown, or during which its laws had become as utterly forgotten as though they had never existed. To many worshippers these old shrines had become extremely precious. They felt it to be either an actual impossibility, or at the best intolerably burdensome, to make their way by long, dreary, and difficult journeys to Jerusalem, when they desired to pay the most ordinary rites of worship. They knew no reason, and had never known of any reason, why Jehovah should be worshipped in one Temple only. All their religious instincts led them the other way. They could point to the example of all the highly honoured saints who had worshipped God at Gilgal, Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba, Kedesh, Gibeah, and many another shrine; and of all the saintly kings who had not dreamt of interfering with such free worship. Why should Jerusalem monopolise all sanctity? It might be a politic view for kings to maintain, and highly profitable for priests to establish; but none of their great prophets, not even the princely Isaiah, had said one syllable against the innocent high places of Jehovah. In those days there were no synagogues. The extinction of the high places doubtless seemed to many of the people an extinction of religion in daily life, and they were more

than half disposed to agree with the Rabshakeh that Jehovah was offended by what they regarded as a burdensome, unwise, and sweeping innovation.—If it be necessary to answer arguments which might have seemed natural, against a custom which might have seemed innocent, it must suffice to say that it was the chief mission of Israel to keep alive among the nations of the world the knowledge of the One True God, and that, amid the constant temptations to accept the gods of the heathen as they were adored in groves and on high places, the faith of Israel could no longer be kept pure except by the Deuteronomic institution of one central and exclusive shrine.

2. But Manasseh did far worse than rehabilitate the worship at the high places which his father had discouraged. "He reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab, King of Israel." This was the first bad element of the new cosmopolitan eclecticism. It involved the acceptance of the Phœnician nature-worship with its manifold abominations. The people had grown familiar with it under Athaliah (2 Kings xi. 18), and under Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 2); but Manasseh, as we infer from the account given of Josiah's reformation, had gone further than either. He had actually ventured to introduce the image of Baal into the Temple, and to set up the Asherah-pillar in front of it (2 Kings xxiii. 4). Worse even than this, he had

[1] LXX., τῇ Βαάλ. The feminine, however, does not imply that Baal was here worshipped as a female deity, but is probably due to the fact that later Jews always avoided using the *names* of idols (from a misapprehension or too literal view of Exod. xxiii. 13), and therefore called Baal *Bosheth* ("shame"), which is feminine. Hence the names Mephibosheth, Jerubbesheth, Ishbosheth. In Suidas (*s.v.* Μανασσῆς) he is charged with having set up in the Temple "a four-faced image of Zeus."

erected in the very Temple (*id.* 7) houses devoted to the execrable *Qedeshim* (Vulg., *effeminati*), in which also the women wove broidered hangings to adorn the shrines of the idol image, as in the worship of the Assyrian Mylitta.[1] He, at the same time, displaced the altar and removed the Ark. To the latter circumstances is perhaps due the Rabbinic legend that Hezekiah hid the Ark till the coming of the Messiah.

3. To this Phœnician worship he added Sabaism, the worship of the stars, "all the host of heaven, whom he served." This was an entirely new phase of idolatry, unknown to the Hebrews till they came in contact with Assyria.[2] It came rapidly into vogue, and exercised over their imaginations the spell of a seductive novelty, as we see from the strong testimony of the prophet Jeremiah.[3] This is why it is so emphatically forbidden in the Book of Deuteronomy.[4] The king built altars to the stars of the Zodiac (*Mazzaroth*), both in the outer court of the Temple, and in the court of the priests, and on these altars incense or victims were continually burned. He also introduced or encouraged the introduction into the Temple precincts of the horses and chariots dedicated to the sun.[5]

When we read of the actual invasion of the Temple-precincts in this as in preceding and subsequent reigns,

[1] For בָּתִּים, in 2 Kings xxiii. 7, the LXX. read χεττίμ (?). Grätz, (*Gesch. d. Juden.*, ii. 277) suggests בְּגָדִים, "broidered robes." Ezek. xvi. 16. See Herod., i. 199; Strabo, xvi. 1058; Luc., *De Deâ. Syr.*, § 6; Libanius, *Opp.*, xi. 456, 557; *Ep. of Jeremy*, 43; Döllinger, *Judenthum u. Heidenthum*, i. 431; Rawlinson, *Phœnicia*, 431.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3; 2 Kings xxiii. 5. Movers, *Rel. d. Phönis.*, i. 65 "In all the books of the Old Testament written before the Assyrian period no trace of star-worship is to be found." 2 Kings xvii. 16.

[3] Jer. vii. 18, viii. 2, xix. 13; Zeph. i. 5.

[4] See Deut. iv. 19, xvii. 3.

[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 11, 12.

we cannot but ask, Were these atrocities committed with the sanction or with the connivance of the priests? We are not told. Yet how can it have been otherwise? If the high priest Azariah could muster eighty priests to oppose King Uzziah, when he merely wished to burn incense in the Temple, as Solomon had done before him, and as Ahaz did after him—if Jehoiada could, according to the Chronicler, muster a perfect army of priests and Levites to dethrone Athaliah, and could so stir up the people that they rose *en masse* to tear down the temple of Baal, and slay Mattan, his high priest,—how was it possible for Manasseh to perpetrate these flagrant acts of idolatrous apostasy, if the priests were all ranged in opposition to his power? Was their authority suddenly paralysed? Did their influence with the people shrivel into nothing when Hezekiah had been carried to his tomb? Or did these priests follow the easy and profitable course which they seem to have followed throughout the whole history of the kings without an exception?—did they simply answer the kings according to their idols?

4. Another, and the most hideous, element of the new mixture of cults was the reintroduction of the ancient Canaanite worship of Moloch with its human sacrifices. Manasseh, like Ahaz, made his son—or, according to the Chronicler and the Septuagint, "his sons"—pass through the fire to this grim Ammonite idol in Tophet of the Valley of Hinnom, so as to leave no chance untried. And herein he was far more inexcusable than his grandfather; for Ahaz had at least been driven by desperate extremity to this last expedient, but Manasseh was living, if not in prosperity, at least in unbroken peace. Moreover, he not only did this himself, but did his utmost to make a popular institution of children-

sacrifice, so that many practised it in the dreadful valley and amid the rocks outside Jerusalem.[1]

5. Even this did not suffice him. To these Assyrian, Phœnician, and Canaanite elements of idolatry he added Babylonian novelties. He practised augury, and used enchantments, and he dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, as though without Egyptian necromancy and Mesopotamian shamanism his eclectic worship would be incomplete.[2]

6. Thus "he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger." He placed a graven image of his Asherah inside the Temple, and utterly profaned the sacred house, and seduced his people "to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel."

Whatever was the conduct of the priests, the prophets were not silent. They denounced Manasseh for having done worse than even the ancient Amorites, and declared that, in consequence of his crimes, God would bring upon Jerusalem such evil as would cause both the ears of him that heard it to tingle;[3] that he would stretch over Jerusalem for ruin the line and the level of Ahab;[4] that He would cast off even the remnant, and deliver them to their enemies; that He would wipe out Jerusalem "as a man wipeth a dish, wiping and turning it upside down."[5]

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[1] See Jer. vii. 31, 32, xix. 2–6, xxxii. 35; Psalm cvi. 37, 38.

[2] Ewald infers from Isa. lvii. 5–9; Jer. ii. 5–13, that he actually *sought* for all foreign kinds of worship, in order to introduce them.

[3] 1 Sam. iii. 11; Jer. xix. 3.

[4] Comp. Isa. xxxiv. 11; Lam. ii. 8.

[5] 2 Kings xxi. 13. LXX., ἀλάβαστρος, *al.* πυξίον. The Vulgate also takes it to mean the obliteration of writing on a tablet: "Delebo Jerusalem sicut deleri solent tabulæ; et ducam crebrius stylum super faciem ejus."

The finest oracles of Micah (vi. 1–vii. 7) were probably uttered in the reign of Manasseh, and give the simplest and purest expression to the supremacy of morality as the one true end and test of religion. Micah is as indifferent as the Decalogue to all claims of rites, ceremonies, and outward worship. "Jehovah demands nothing for Himself; all that He asks is for man: this is the fundamental law of the theocracy."

The apostasies of the king and the denunciation of the prophets thus came into fierce collision, and led naturally to persecution and bloodshed. Perhaps in Mic. vii. 1–7 we catch the echoes of the Reign of Terror. The king resorted to violence, using, no doubt, the tyrant's devilish plea of necessity. He made blood run like water in the streets of Jerusalem from end to end,[1] and, in the exaggerated phrase of Josephus, was *daily* slaying the prophets.[2] It was during this persecution, according to Rabbinic tradition, that Isaiah received the martyr's crown.[3]

And no miracles were wrought to save the martyrs. Elijah and Elisha had been surrounded with a blaze of miracles, but in Judah no prophet arose who could so wield the power of Heaven.

At this point the narrative of the historian about Manasseh ends. If he shared the current opinion of his day, which connected individual and national pros-

[1] 2 Kings xxi. 16; Heb., "from mouth to mouth"; LXX., *στόμα εἰς στόμα*; Vulg., *donec impleret Jerusalem usque ad os.* Comp. 2 Kings x. 21.

[2] *Antt.*, X. iii. 1: "He butchered alike all the just among the Hebrews." To this reign of terror some refer Psalm xii. 1; Isa. lvii. 1–4.

[3] This (as I have said) cannot be regarded as certain. Isaiah began to prophesy in the year that King Uzziah died, sixty years before Manasseh. It is a Jewish Haggadah. See Gesen on Isa. i., p. 9, and the Apocryphal "Ascension of Isaiah."

perity with well-doing, and regarded length of days as a sign of the favour of Heaven, while, on the other hand, misfortune and misery invariably resulted from the wrath of Jehovah, he could not have been otherwise than surprised, and perhaps even pained, to have to relate that Manasseh reigned fifty-five years. Not only was his reign longer than that of any other king of Israel or Judah; not only did he attain a greater age than any of them; but, further, no calamity seems to have marked his rule. A contented and protected vassal of Esarhaddon, secure from his attacks, and also unmolested by the weakened and subjugated nations around him, he would seem, in the story of the Kings, to have enjoyed an enviable external lot, and to have presided over a people who were happy, in that, during his rule, they had no history. But whatever the writer may have felt, he tells us no more, and lets us see Manasseh sink peacefully into his grave "in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza," and leave to his son Amon a peaceful realm and an undisputed crown. Such a career would undoubtedly perplex and confound all the preconceived opinions of Jewish orthodoxy. The prosperity of Manasseh would have presented as great a problem to them as the miseries of Job. They looked to temporal prosperity as the reward of righteousness, and to acute misery as the retribution of apostasy and sin. They had little or no conception of a future which should redress the balance of apparent earthly inequalities. Alike the sight of Manasseh's long reign and Josiah's undeserved death in battle would give a powerful shock to their fixed convictions.

Far different is the end of the story in the Book of Chronicles The records of Esarhaddon tell us that

in 680 he made an expedition into Palestine to restore the shaken influence of his father,[1] and about 647 he mentions among his submissive tributaries the kings of Tyre, Edom, Moab, Gaza, Ekron, Askelon, Gebal, Ammon, Ashdod, and Manasseh, King of Judah ("Minasi-sar-Yahudi"), as well as ten princes of Cyprus. Whether the King of Judah rebelled later on, and intrigued with Tirhakah, we do not know; but in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11 we read that Esarhaddon sent his generals to Jerusalem, took Manasseh by stratagem, drove rings through his lips, bound him in chains, and brought him to Babylon, where Esarhaddon was holding his court.[2] We find from the *Eponym Canon* that Tyre revolted from Assyria in the tenth year of Esarhaddon, and Manasseh may have been drawn away to join in the revolt; or he may have joined Shamash-shum-ukîn, the Viceroy of Babylon, in his revolt against his brother Assurbanipal. As a rule, the lot of a conquered vassal at the Assyrian Court was horrible, and in his utter misery Manasseh repented, humbled himself, and prayed. His prayer was heard. The despots of Nineveh were capricious alike in their

[1] Esarhaddon reigned only eight years, till 668, and then resigned in favour of his son Assurbanipal. In his reign Psammetichus recovered Egypt, and put an end to the Dodecarchy. In the reign of his successor, Assuredililani, Assyria began to decline (647–625).

[2] Comp. Isa. xxxix. 6; Jos., *Antt.*, X. iii. 2. The phrase "among the thorns" means "*with rings*" (comp. Isa. xxx. 28, xxxvii. 29; Ezek. xxxviii. 4; Amos iv. 2). Assurbanipal says similarly that he seized Necho, "bound him with bonds and iron chains, hands and feet," but afterwards allowed him to return to Egypt (Schrader, ii. 59).

[3] Late and worthless Haggadoth, echoed by still later writers (Suidas and Syncellus), say he was kept in a brazen cage, fed on bran bread dipped in vinegar, etc. See *Apost. Constt.*, ii. 22: "And the Lord hearkened to his voice, and there became about him a flame of fire, and all the irons about him melted." John Damasc., *Parall.*,

insults and in their favours, and Esarhaddon not only pardoned Manasseh, but sent him back to Jerusalem,[1] thinking that he would be more useful to him there than in a Babylonian dungeon. After this reprieve he lived like a penitent and a patriot. Esarhaddon was preparing for his expedition against Tirhakah, and would not attack a king who was now bound to him by gratitude as well as fear. But the times were very troublous. Manasseh prepared for eventualities by building an outer wall on the west of the city of David, unto Gihon in the Valley, by surrounding Ophel with a high wall, and by garrisoning the fenced cities.[2] All this was necessary and patriotic work, considering that Judah might be attacked by other enemies as well as the Assyrians. She was like a grain of corn amid the grinding mills of the nations. Media and Lydia were rising into strong kingdoms. Babylon was becoming daily more formidable. Dim rumours reached the East of movements among vast hosts of Cimmerian and Scythian barbarians. Jerusalem had no human strength for war. She could only rely upon her battlements, on the natural strength of her position, and on the protection of her God. Almost in the last year of Manasseh, the powerful Psammetichus I., king of a now united Egypt, made an assault on Ashdod; but he did not venture on the difficult task of besieging Jerusalem.

The religious reformation of Manasseh attested the

ii. 15, quotes from Julius Africanus, that while Manasseh was saying a psalm his iron bonds burst, and he escaped. See *Speaker's Commentary*, on Apocrypha, ii. 363.

[1] Such pardon from a king of Assyria was rare, but not unparalleled. Pharaoh Necho I. was taken in chains to Nineveh, and afterwards set free (Schrader, *K. A. T.*, p. 371).

[2] See 2 Chron. xxvii. 3. The "fish gate" was, perhaps, a weak point (Zeph. i. 10).

sincerity of his amendment. He flung out the Asherah from the Temple, put away the strange gods, destroyed the altars, burnt sacrifices to God, and used all his power to restore the worship of Jehovah. He did not, however, destroy the high places. For this story the Chronicler refers to "the words of Chozai,"[1] according to the present text, which some suppose to have meant "the story of the Seers." He also refers to a prayer of Manasseh, which cannot of course be the Greek forgery of the second or third century which goes by that name in the Apocrypha.[2] His repentance doubtless secured his own salvation. "Whoso saith 'Manasseh hath no part in the world to come,'" said Rabbi Johanan, "discourageth the penitent";—but the partial reformation was too late to save his land.

Is this a literal history, or an edifying Haggadah? The non-historical character of the story is maintained by De Wette, Graf, Nöldeke, and many others. Both views have been taken. This we can, at any rate, assert—that there seems to be nothing in the story which is inconsistent with probability. The Chronicler may have derived it from genuine documents or traditions, though it is difficult to account for the silence of the elder and more trustworthy historian. Nor is it only his silence for which we have to account; it is the continuance of his positive statements. It would

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19. Heb., *dibhri Chozai*; A.V., "the story of the Seers"; R.V., "in the history of Hozai"; LXX., *ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων τῶν ὁρατικῶν*; Vulg., *in sermonibus Hozai*. The elements of doubt suggested by the name "Babylon," and by the liberation of Manasseh, have been removed by further knowledge. See Budge, *Hist. of Esarhaddon*, p. 78; Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 369 ff.

[2] Since the Council of Trent this prayer has been relegated to the end of the Vulgate with 3, 4, Esdras. Verse 8 (the supposed sinlessness of the Patriarchs) at once shows it to be a mere composition.

be, in any case, a strange conception of history which, after narrating a man's crimes, omitted alike the retribution which befell him on account of them, the heartfelt penitence for the sake of which they were forgiven, and the seriously earnest endeavour to undo at least something of the evil which he had done. Not only does the historian make these omissions, but in no subsequent allusion to Manasseh does he so much as indicate that he is aware of his amendment.[1] He says that Amon "did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did."[2] He speaks of the altars to the hosts of heaven which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the Temple as still standing in the reign of Josiah, though the Chronicler tells us that Manasseh had cast them all out of the city.[3] He says that, notwithstanding all that Josiah did, "the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal,"[4] and that on this account God cast off Jerusalem. Never, even by the most distant allusions, does he refer to Manasseh's captivity, his prayer, his penitence, or his counter-efforts. Had he been aware of these, his silence would have been neither generous nor just. Nay, he even leaves apparent facts at conflict with the Chronicler's story, for he makes Josiah do all that the Chronicler tells us that Manasseh himself had done in the removal of his worst abominations.

Even now we have not exhausted the historic difficulties which surround the repentance of Manasseh. During his reign Jeremiah received his call, and while still a young boy began his work. Neither he, nor Zephaniah, nor Habakkuk drop the slightest hint that

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 12.
[2] 2 Kings xxi. 20.
[3] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 15.
[4] 2 Kings xxiii. 26.

the wicked, idolatrous king had ever turned over a new leaf. Jeremiah's silence is specially difficult to account for. He, too, records Jehovah's final and irrevocable decree, that He would give up Judah to death, to exile, and to famine, to the sword to slay, to the dogs to tear, to the fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the earth to devour and to destroy.[1] And the cause of the pitiless doom pronounced by a Judge weary of repenting is "because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, King of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem."[2]

The judgment was not long delayed.

It was the vast movement of the Scythians in Media and Western Asia, and the rumours of it, which gave to Manasseh and Amon such respite as they had; and even this respite was full of misery and fear.[3]

[1] Jer. xv. 1–9.

[2] The later Jews certainly took no account of his repentance. His name was execrated (see the substitution of Manasseh for Moses in Judg. xviii. 30), and he was denied all part in the world to come. The Apocryphal "Prayer of Manasses" has no authority, though it is interesting (Butler, *Analogy*, pt. ii., ch. v.).

[3] In estimating the Chronicler's story, we cannot wholly forget the fact that a number of Haggadic legends clustered thickly round the name of Manasseh in the literature of the later Jews. He is charged with incest, with the murder of Isaiah, the distortion of Scripture, etc., and is represented as having got to heaven, not by real repentance, but by challenging God on His superiority to idols. The Targum, after 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, adds, "And the Chaldees made a copper mule, and pierced it all over with little holes, and put him therein. And when he was in straits, he cried in vain to all his idols. Then he prayed to Jehovah and humbled himself; but the angels shut every window and lattice of heaven, that his prayer might not enter. But forthwith the pity of the Lord of the world rolled forth, and He made an aperture in heaven, and the mule burst asunder, and the Spirit breathed on him, and he forsook all his idols." "No books," says Dr. Neubauer, "are more subject to additions and various adaptations than popular histories." See Mr. Ball's commentary (*Speaker's Commentary*, ii. 309, and *Sanhedrin*, f. 99, 2; 101, 1; 103, 2).

AMON[1]

B.C. 641—639

2 KINGS xxi. 19—26

THE brief reign of Amon is only a sort of unimportant and miserable annex to that of his father. As he was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, he must have witnessed the repentance and reforming zeal of his father, if, in spite of all difficulties, we assume that narrative to be historical. In that case, however, the young man was wholly untouched by the latter phase of Manasseh's life, and flung himself headlong into the career of the king's earlier idolatries. "He walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them"—which was the more extraordinary if Manasseh's last acts had been to dethrone and destroy these strange gods. He even "multiplied trespass," so that in his son's reign we find every form of abomination as triumphant as though Manasseh had never attempted to check the tide of evil. We know nothing more of Amon. Apparently he only reigned two years.[2] He is the only Jewish king who bears the name of a foreign—an Egyptian—deity.

For pictures of the state of things in this reign we may look to the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and they are forced to use the darkest colours.

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[1] The name Amon is unusual. Some identify it with the name of the Egyptian sun-god (Nah. iii. 8). If so, we see yet another element of Manasseh's syncretism, and (as some fancy) an attempt to open relations with Psammetichus of Egypt. But perhaps the name may be Hebrew for "Architect" (1 Kings xxii. 26; Neh. vii. 59).

[2] 2 Kings xxi. 19. The LXX. reads "twelve years," but not so Josephus (*Antt.*, X. iv. 1), or 2 Chron. xxxiii. 21.

This is Zephaniah's picture:—

"Woe to her that is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city!
She obeyed not the voice; she received not instruction;
She trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.
Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions;
Her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones on the morrow.
Her prophets are light and treacherous persons:
Her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."[1]

He tells us that Baal and his black-robed *chemarim*[2] are still prevalent—that men worshipped on their house-tops the host of heaven, and swore by "Moloch their king." Therefore would God search Jerusalem with candles, and would visit the men who had sunk, like thick wine on the lees, and who said in their infidel hearts, "Jehovah will not do good, neither will He do evil." He is an Epicurean God, a cypher, a *fainéant*. "Men make all kinds of fine calculations," says Luther, "but the Lord God says to them, 'For whom, then, do you hold Me? For a cypher? Do I sit here in vain, and to no purpose? You shall know that I will turn their accounts about finely, and make them all false reckonings.'"

Not less dark is the view of Jeremiah.[3] Like Diogenes in Athens, Jeremiah in vain searches Jerusalem for a faithful man. Among the poor he finds brutish obstinacy, among the rich insolent defiance.

[1] Zeph. iii. 1–11. Comp. i. 4.

[2] *Chemarim*, 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Hos. x. 5. The root in Syriac means "to be sad," but Kimchi derives it from a root "to be black." The Vulgate renders it *æditui* and *aruspices*.

[3] We are told in the titles of their books that both these prophets prophesied in the days of Josiah; but such pictures can only apply to the earliest years of his reign.

They were like fed horses in the morning—lecherous and unruly. They are slanderers, adulterers, corrupters, murderers. They worship Baal and strange gods. "They set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit. They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass in deeds of wickedness."[1] "An astonishment and horror is done in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"[2]

"From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have treated also the hurt of My people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall."[3]

The wretched reign ended wretchedly. Amon met the fate of Amaziah and of Joash. He was murdered by conspirators—by some of his own courtiers—in his own palace. He was not the victim of any general rebellion. The people of the land were apparently content with the existent idolatry, which left them free for lives of lust and luxury, of greed and gain. They resented the disorder introduced by an intrigue of eunuchs or court officials. They rose and slew the whole band of conspirators. Amon was buried with his father in the new burial-place of the Kings in the garden of Uzza, and the people placed his son Josiah —a child of eight years old—upon the throne.

[1] See Jer. v., vi., vii., *passim*.
[2] Jer. v. 30, 31.
[3] Jer. vi. 13–15.

CHAPTER XXX

JOSIAH

B.C. 639—608[1]

2 KINGS xxii., xxiii

"Τὴν δὲ φύσιν αὐτὸς ἄριστος ὑπῆρχε καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν εὖ γεγονώς."—Jos., *Antt.*, X. iv. 1.

"In outline dim and vast
Their fearful shadows cast
The giant forms of Empires, on their way
To ruin: one by one
They tower, and they are gone."

KEBLE.

IF we are to understand the reign of Josiah as a whole, we must preface it by some allusion to the great epoch-marking circumstances of his age, which explain the references of contemporary prophets, and which, in great measure, determined the foreign policy of the pious king.

The three memorable events of this brief epoch were, (I.) the movement of the Scythians, (II.) the rise of Babylon, and (III.) the humiliation of Nineveh, followed by her total destruction.

I. Many of Jeremiah's earlier prophecies belong to this period, and we see that both he and Zephaniah —who was probably a great-great-grandson of King

[1] Kamphausen (*Die Chronologie der hebräischer Könige*) makes Josiah suceed to the throne in 638.

Hezekiah himself,[1] and prophesied in this reign[2]—are greatly occupied with a danger from the North which seems to threaten universal ruin.

So overwhelming is the peril that Zephaniah begins with the tremendously sweeping menace, "*I will utterly consume all things off the earth*, saith the Lord."

Then the curse rushes down specifically upon Judah and Jerusalem; and the state of things which the prophet describes shows that, if Josiah began himself to seek the Lord at eight years old, he did not take—and was, perhaps, unable to take—any active steps towards the extinction of idolatry till he was old enough to hold in his own hand the reins of power.

For Zephaniah denounces the wrath of Jehovah on three classes of idolaters—viz., (1) the remnant of Baal-worshippers with their *chemarim*, or unlawful priests, and the syncretising priests (*kohanim*) of Jehovah, who combine His worship with that of the stars, to whom they burn incense upon the housetops; (2) the waverers, who swear at once by Jehovah and by Malcham, their king; and (3) the open despisers and apostates. For all these the day of Jehovah is near; He has prepared them for sacrifice, and the sacrificers are at hand.[3] Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, Ekron, the Cherethites,

[1] Otherwise his genealogy would not be mentioned for four generations (Hitzig).

[2] Zeph. i. 1. Jeremiah also was highly connected. He was a priest, and his father Hilkiah may be the high priest who found the book; "for his uncle Shallum, father of his cousin Hanameel, was the husband of Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings xxii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 7). The fact that Jeremiah's property was at Anathoth, where lived the descendants of Ithamar (1 Kings ii. 26), whereas Hilkiah was of the family of Eleazar (1 Chron. vi. 4–13), does not seem fatal to the view that his father was the high priest.

[3] Zeph. ii. 4–7.

Canaan, Philistia, are all threatened by the same impending ruin, as well as Moab and Ammon, who shall lose their lands. Ethiopia, too, and Assyria shall be smitten, and Nineveh shall become so complete a desolation that "pelicans and hedgehogs shall bivouac upon her chapiters, the owl shall hoot in her windows, and the crow croak upon the threshold, 'Crushed! desolated!' and all that pass by shall hiss and wag their hands."[1]

The pictures of the state of society drawn by Jeremiah do not, as we have seen, differ from those drawn by his contemporary.[2] Jeremiah, too, writing perhaps before Josiah's reformation, complains that God's people have forsaken the fountains of living water, to hew out for themselves broken cisterns. He complains of empty formalism in the place of true righteousness, and even goes so far as to say that backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah (iii. 1–11). He, too, prophesies speedy and terrific chastisement. Let Judah gather herself into fenced cities, and save her goods by flight, for God is bringing evil from the North, and a great destruction.[3]

"The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the nations is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant. Behold, he cometh as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind." Besiegers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

[1] Zeph. ii. 12–15.

[2] Jer. ii. 1–35. Considering the very great part played by Jeremiah for nearly half a century of the last history of Judah, the non-mention of his name in the Book of Kings is a circumstance far from easy to explain.

[3] Jer. iv. 6, A.V., "retire, stay not." Comp. Isa. x. 24–31.

The heart of the kings shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

"For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end"—and, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved!"[1]

"I will bring a nation upon you from far, O House of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language"—unlike that of the Assyrians—"thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. They shall batter thy fenced cities, in which thou trustest with weapons of war."[2]

"O ye children of Benjamin, save your goods by flight: for evil is imminent from the North, and a great destruction. Behold, a people cometh from the North Country, and a great nation shall be raised from the farthest part of the earth. They lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble."[3]

And the judgment is close at hand. The early blossoming bud of the almond tree is the type of its imminence. The seething caldron, with its front turned from the North, typifies an invasion which shall soon boil over and flood the land.[4]

[1] Jer. iv. 7–27.

[2] Jer. v. 15–17.

[3] Jer. vi. 1, 22, 23, 24.

[4] The almond tree (*shâqâd*) "seems to be awake (*shâqâd*), whatsoever trees are still sleeping in the torpor of winter" (Tristram *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, 332; Jer. i. 11–14).

What was the fierce people thus vaguely indicated as coming from the North? The foes indicated in these passages are not the long-familiar Assyrians, but the Scythians and Cimmerians.[1]

As yet the Hebrews had only heard of them by dim and distant rumour. When Ezekiel prophesied they were still an object of terror, but he foresees their defeat and annihilation. They should be gathered into the confines of Israel, but only for their destruction.[2] The prophet is bidden to set his face towards Gog, of the land of Magog, the Prince of Rosh,[3] Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him that God would turn him about, and put hooks in his jaws, and drive forth all his army of bucklered and sworded horsemen, the hordes of the uttermost part of the North. They should come like a storm upon the mountains of Israel, and spoil the defenceless villages; but they should come simply for their own destruction by blood and by pestilence. God should smite their bows out of their left hands, and their arrows out of the right, and the ravenous birds of Israel should feed upon the carcases of their warriors. There should be endless

[1] The name Kimmerii (on the Assyrian inscriptions Gimirrai) is connected with Gomer. The Persians call them Sakai or Scyths. The nomad Scyths had driven the Kimmerii from the Dniester while Psammetichus was King of Egypt. For allusions to this see Jer. vi. 22 *seq.*, viii. 16, ix. 10. The first notice of them is in an inscription of Esarhaddon, B.C. 677, who says that he defeated "Tiushpa, *the Gimirrai, a roving warrior*, whose own country was remote." Zephaniah and Jeremiah were certainly thinking of the Scythians (Eichhorn, Hitzig, Ewald; and more recently Kuenen, *Onderzoek*, ii. 123; Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, 150). In B.C. 626 they could not have consciously had the Chaldæans in view, though, twenty-three years later, Jeremiah may have had.

[2] See Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.

Ezek. xxxviii. 2. So Gesenius, Hävernick, etc., and R.V.

bonfires of all the instruments of war, and the place of their burial should be called "the valley of the multitude of Gog."

Much of this is doubtless an ideal picture, and Ezekiel may be thinking of the fall of the Chaldæans. But the terms he uses remind us of the dim Northern nomads, and the names Rosh and Meshech in juxtaposition involuntarily recall those of Russia and Moscow.[1]

Our chief historical authority respecting this influx of Northern barbarians is Herodotus.[2] He tells us that the nomad Scythians, apparently a Turanian race, who may have been subjected to the pressure of population, swarmed over the Caucasus, dispossessed the Cimmerians (Gomer), and settled themselves in Saccasene, a province of Northern Armenia. From this province the Scythians gained the name of the Saquî. The name of Gog seems to be taken from Gugu, a Scythian prince, who was taken captive by Assurbanipal from the land of the Saquî.[3] Magog is perhaps Mat-gugu, "land of Gog." These rude, coarse warriors, like the hordes of Attila, or Zenghis Khan, or Tamerlane—who were descended from them—magne-

[1] The form in the Vulgate and the Alexandrian MS. of the LXX. is Mosech; in the Assyrian inscription, Muski. As far back as 1120 Tiglath-Pileser I. had overrun Tubal (the Tublai, Tabareni) and Moschi, between the Black Sea and the Taurus. They were neither Aryans nor Semites. In Gen. x. 2; 1 Chron. i. 5, Gog, Magog, Meshech, and Gomer are sons of Japheth. They are referred to in Rev. xx. 8.

[2] Herod., i. 74, 103–106, iv. 1–22, vii. 64; Pliny, *H. N.*, v. 16; Jos., *Antt.*, I. vi. 1; Syncellus, *Chronogl.*, i. 405.

[3] Sayce, *Ethnology of the Bible*; *Records of the Past*, ix. 40; Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 159. Some identify Gog with Gyges, King of Lydia, who was killed in battle *against* the Scythians, but whose name stood for a geographical symbol of Asia Minor, sometimes called Lud. It is said that in 665 Gyges (Gugu) sent two Scythian chiefs as a present to Nineveh.

tised the imagination of civilised people, as the Huns did in the fourth century.[1] They overthrew the kingdom of Urartis (Armenia), and drove the all-but exterminated remnant of the Moschi and Tabali to the mountain-fortresses by the Black Sea, turning them, as it were, into a nation of ghosts in Sheol.[2] Then they burst like a thunder-cloud on Mesopotamia, desolating the villages with their arrow-flights, but too unskilled to take fenced towns. They swept down the Shephelah of Palestine, and plundered the rich temple of Aphrodite (Astarte Ourania) at Askelon, thereby incurring the curse of the goddess in the form of a strange disease. But on the borders of Egypt they were diplomatically met by Psammetichus (*d.* 611) with gifts and prayers. Judah seems only to have suffered indirectly from this invasion. The main army of Scyths poured down the maritime plain, and there was no sufficient booty to tempt any but their straggling bands to the barren hills of Judah.[3] It was the report of this over-flooding from the North which probably evoked the alarming prophecies of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, though they found their clearer fulfilment in the invasion of the Chaldees.

[1] Hence, in 2 Macc. iv. 47, 3 Macc. vii. 5, Scythian is used with the modern connotation of "Barbarian."

[2] Ezek. xxxii. 26, 27; Cheyne, *Jeremiah* ("Men of the Bible") p. 31.

[3] *Expositor*, 2nd series, iv 263; Cheyne, *Jeremiah*, 31. Hitzig and Ewald (erroneously?) refer Psalms lv., lix., to these events, and it seems also to be an error to suppose that the later name of Bethshan —Scythopolis—has anything to do with this incursion. Like the names of Pella, Philadelphia, etc., it is later than the age of Alexander the Great. See 2 Macc. xii. 30; Jos., *B. J.*, II. xviii., *Vit.* vi. Perhaps Scythopolis is a corruption of Sikytopolis, the city of Sikkuth; or Scythian may merely stand for "Barbarian," as in 3 Macc. vii. 5; Col. iii. 11 (Cheyne, *l.c.*).

II. This rush of wild nomads averted for a time the fate of Nineveh.

The Medes, an Aryan people, had settled south of the Caspian, B.C. 790; and in the same century one of these tribes—the Persians—had settled south-east of Elam the northern coast of the Persian Gulf. Cyaxares founded the Median Empire, and attacked Nineveh. The Scythian invasion forced him to abandon the siege, and the Scythians burnt the Assyrian palace and plundered the ruins. But Cyaxares succeeded in intoxicating and murdering the Scythian leaders at a banquet, and bribed the army to withdraw. Then Cyaxares, with the aid of the Babylonians under Nabopolassar their rebel viceroy, besieged and took Nineveh—probably about B.C. 608—while its last king and his captains were revelling at a banquet.[1]

The fall of Nineveh was not astonishing. The empire had long been "slowly bleeding to death" in consequence of its incessant wars. The city deemed itself impregnable behind walls a hundred feet high, on which three chariots could drive abreast, and mantled with twelve hundred towers; but she perished, and all the nations—whom she had known how to crush, but had with "her stupid and cruel tyranny" never known how to govern—shouted for joy. That joy finds its triumphant expression in more than one of the prophets, but specially in the vivid pæan of Nahum. His date is approximately fixed at about B.C. 660, by his reference to the atrocities inflicted by Assurbanipal on the Egyptian city of No-Amon. "Art thou [Nineveh] better," he asks, "than No-Amon, that was situate among the canals, that had the water round about her,

[1] Nah. i. 10, ii. 5, iii. 12; Diod. Sic., ii. 26.

whose rampart was the Nile, and her wall was the waters? Yet she went into captivity! Her young children were dashed to pieces at the head of all the streets: they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt faint away, thou shalt seek a stronghold because of the enemy."[1]

All the details of her fall are dim; but Nineveh was, in the language of the prophets, swept with the besom of destruction. Her ruins became stones of emptiness, and the line of confusion was stretched over her. Nahum ends with the cry,—

> "There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous:
> All that hear the bruit of this, clap the hands over thee:
> For upon whom hath thy wickedness not passed continually?"

In truth, Assyria, the ferocious foe of Israel, of Judah, and all the world, vanished suddenly, like a dream when one awaketh;[2] and those who passed over its ruins, like Xenophon and his Ten Thousand in B.C. 401, knew not what they were.[3] Her very name had become forgotten in two centuries. "*Etiam periere ruinæ!*" The burnt relics and cracked tablets of her former splendour began to be revealed to the world once more in 1842, and it is only during the last quarter of a century that the fragments of her history have been laboriously deciphered.

III. Such were the events witnessed in their germs or in their completion by the contemporaries of Josiah and the prophets who adorned his reign. It was during

[1] Nah. iii. 8–11.

[2] Strabo, xvi. 1, 3: ἠφανίσθη παραχρῆμα.

[3] Xen., *Anab.*, III. iv. 7.

this period, also, that the power to whom the ultimate ruin and capitivity of Jerusalem was due sprang into formidable proportions. The ultimate scourge of God to the guilty people and the guilty city was not to be the Assyrian, nor the Scythian, nor the Egyptian, nor any of the old Canaanite or Semitic foes of Israel, nor the Phœnician, nor the Philistine. With all these she had long contended, and held her own. It was before the Chaldee that she was doomed to fall, and the Chaldee was a new phenomenon of which the existence had hardly been recognised as a danger till the warning prophecy of Isaiah to Hezekiah after the embassy of the rebel viceroy Merodach-Baladan.[1]

It is to Habakkuk, in prophecies written very shortly after the death of Josiah, that we must look for the impression of terror caused by the Chaldees.

Nabopolassar,[2] sent by the successor of Assurbanipal to quell a Chaldæan revolt, seized the viceroyalty of Babylon, and joined Cyaxares in the overthrow of Nineveh. From that time Babylon became greater and more terrible than Nineveh, whose power it inherited. Habakkuk (ii. 1–19) paints the rapacity, the selfishness, the inflated ambition, the cruelty, the drunkenness, the idolatry of the Chaldæans. He calls them (i. 5–11) a rough and restless nation, frightful and terrible, whose horsemen were swifter than leopards, fiercer than evening wolves, flying to gorge on prey like the vultures, mocking at kings and princes, and flinging dust over strongholds. Nor has he the least comfort in looking on their resistless fury, except the deeply

[1] Chaldees, Kardim, Kasdim, Kurds.

[2] Nabu-pal-ussur, "Nebo protect the son" B.C. 625–7. Jos., *Ant.* X. xi. 1: comp. *Ap.*, i. 19.

significant oracle—an oracle which contains the secret of their ultimate doom—

> "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright in him:
> But the righteous man shall live by his fidelity."

The prophet places absolute reliance on the general principle that "pride and violence dig their own grave."[1]

[1] Newman, *Hebrew Monarchy*, p. 315.

CHAPTER XXXI

JOSIAH'S REFORMATION

2 KINGS xxii. 8—20, xxiii. 1—25

"And the works of Josias were upright before his Lord with a heart full of godliness."—1 ESDRAS i. 23.

"From Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."—ISA. ii. 3.

IT is from the Prophets—Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Ezekiel—that we catch almost our sole glimpses of the vast world-movements of the nations which must have loomed large on the minds of the King of Judah and of all earnest politicians in that day. As they did not directly affect the destiny of Judah till the end of the reign, they do not interest the historian of the Kings or the later Chronicler. The things which rendered the reign memorable in their eyes were chiefly two—the finding of "the Book of the Law" in the House of the Lord, and the consequent religious reformation.

It is with the first of these two events that we must deal in the present chapter.

Josiah began to reign as a child of eight, and it may be that the emphatic and honourable mention of his mother—Jedidah ("Beloved"), daughter of Adaiah of Boscath—may be due to the fact that he owed to her training that early proclivity to faithfulness which earns for him the unique testimony, that he not only "walked

in the way of David his father," but that "he turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

At first, of course, as a mere child, he could take no very active steps. The Chronicler says that at sixteen he began to show his devotion, and at twenty set himself the task of purging Judah and Jerusalem from the taint of idols. Things were in a bad condition, as we see from the bitter complaints and denunciations of Zephaniah and Jeremiah. Idolatry of the worst description was still openly tolerated. But Josiah was supported by a band of able and faithful advisers. Shaphan, grandfather of the unhappy Gedaliah—afterwards the Chaldæan viceroy over conquered Judah—was scribe; Hilkiah, the son of Shallum and the ancestor of Ezra, was the high priest.[1] By them the king was assisted, first in the obliteration of the prevalent emblems of idolatry, and then in the purification of the Temple. Two centuries and a half had elapsed since it had been last repaired by Joash, and it must have needed serious restoration during long years of neglect in the reigns of Ahaz, of Manasseh, and of Amon. Subscriptions were collected from the people by "the keepers of the door," and were freely entrusted to the workmen and their overseers, who employed them faithfully in the objects for which they were designed.[2]

The repairs led to an event of momentous influence on all future time. During the cleansing of the Temple Hilkiah came to Shaphan, and said, "I have found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord." Perhaps

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 4. We have here the first mention of "the second priest" (if, with Grätz, we read *Cohen mishneh*, as in 2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lii. 24). In later days he was called "the Sagan." At this time he probably acted as "Captain of the Temple" (Grätz, ii. 319).

[2] Comp. 2 Kings xii. 15, where we find the same remark.

the copy of the book had been placed by some priest's hand beside the Ark, and had been discovered during the removal of the rubbish which neglect had there accumulated. Shaphan read the book; and when next he had to see the king to tell him about the progress of the repairs, he said to him, "Hilkiah the priest hath handed me a book." Josiah bade him read some of it aloud. It is evident that he read the curses contained in Deut. xxviii. They horrified the pious monarch; for all that they contained, and the laws to which they were appended, were wholly new to him. He might well be amazed that a code so solemn, and purporting to have emanated from Moses, should, in spite of maledictions so fearful, have become an absolute dead letter. In deep alarm he sent the priest, the scribe Shaphan, with his son Ahikam, and Abdon, the son of Micaiah, and Asahiah, a court official, to inquire of Jehovah, whose great anger could not but be kindled against king and people by the obliteration and nullity of His law. They consulted Huldah, the only prophetess mentioned in the Old Testament, except Miriam and Deborah.[1] She was the wife of Shallum and keeper of the priests' robes,[2] and she lived in the suburbs of the city.[3] Her answer was an uncompromising menace. All the curses which the king had

[1] Exod. xv. 20; Judg. iv. 4; Isa. viii. 3. "The prophetess" seems to mean "prophet's wife." Noadiah was a false prophetess.

[2] Exod. xxviii. 2, etc.

[3] 2 Kings xxii. 14. Heb., *mishneh*, lit. "second"; A.V., "the college"; R.V., "the second quarter." Perhaps it means "the lower city" (Neh. xi. 9; Zeph. i. 10). It puzzled the LXX.: ἐν τῇ μασενᾷ. Vulg., *in secunda*. Jerome says, "*Haud dubium quin urbis partem significet quæ interiori muro vallabatur.*" Comp. Zeph. i. 10, "an howling from the *second*" (*i.e.*, quarter of the city); Neh. xi. 9, where, for "*second over the city*" (A. and R.V.), read "over the second part of the city."

heard against the place and people should be pitilessly fulfilled,—only, as the king had showed a tender heart, and had humbled himself before Jehovah, he should go to his own grave in peace.[1]

Thereupon the king summoned to the Temple a great assembly of priests, prophets, and all the people, and, standing by the pillar (or "on the platform")[2] in the entrance of the inner court, read "all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the House of the Lord" in their ears, and joined with them in "the covenant" to obey the hitherto unknown or totally forgotten laws which were inculcated in the newly discovered volume.

Immediate action followed. The priests were ordered to bring out of the Temple all the vessels made for Baal, for the Asherah, and for the host of heaven; they were burnt outside Jerusalem in the Valley of Kedron, and their ashes taken to Bethel.[3] The *chemarim* of the high places were suppressed, as well as all other idolatrous priests who burnt incense to the signs of the Zodiac, the Hyades, and the heavenly bodies.[4] The Asherah itself was taken out of the

[1] Another reading is "in Jerusalem," which gets over an historic difficulty.

[2] Comp. 2 Kings xi. 14; LXX., *ἐπὶ τοῦ στύλου*; Heb., *al-ha-ammud*; Vulg., *super gradum*.

[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 4; for "in the fields of Kedron" one version has *ἐν τῷ ἐμπυρισμῷ τοῦ χειμάῤῥου*, "in the burning-place of the wady,"—perhaps reading *bemisrephoth* for *bishedamoth*, and alluding to lime-kilns in the wady. It is surprising that they should carry the ashes "to Bethel." Thenius suggests the reading בֵּית־אֵל, "place of execution" (lit., "house of nothingness").

[4] Hos. x. 5; Zeph. i. 4 (the only other places where the word occurs). The *delevit* of the Vulgate (2 Kings xxiii. 5) only means that he put them down, and the *κατέκαυσε* of the LXX. should be *κατέπαυσε*.

Temple, and it is truly amazing that we should find it there so late in Josiah's reign. He burnt it in the Kedron, stamped it to powder, and scattered the powder "on the graves of the common people." The Chronicler says "on the graves of them that had sacrificed" to the idols[1];—but this is an inexplicable statement, since it is (as Professor Lumby says) very improbable that idolaters had a separate burial-place. It is equally shocking, and to us incomprehensible, to read that the houses of the degraded *Qedeshim* still stood, not "by the Temple" (A.V.), but "*in* the Temple,"[2] and that in these houses, or chambers, the women still "wove embroideries[3] for the Asherah." What was Hilkiah doing? If the priests of the *high places* were so guilty from Geba to Beersheba, did no responsibility attach to the high priest and other priests of the Temple who permitted the existence of these enormities, not only in the *bamoth* at the city gates,[4] but in the very courts of the mountain of the Lord's House? If the priests of the immemorial shrines were degraded from their prerogatives, and were not allowed to come up to the altar of Jehovah in Jerusalem, by what law of justice were they to be regarded as so immeasurably inferior to the highest members of their own order, who, for years together, had permitted the worship of a wooden phallic emblem, and the existence of the worst heathen abominations within the very Temple

[1] Comp. Jer. ii. 23, where the LXX. has ἐν τῷ πολυανδρίῳ. In 2 Chron. xxxiv. 4, perhaps the true reading is, not *Beni-ha-'âm*, but *Beni-hinnom*—which would mean that he scattered the dust in the gehenna of Jerusalem. Comp. 1 Kings xv. 13.

[2] For these Galli, see Seneca, *De Vit. Beat.*, 27; Pliny, *H. N.*, xi. 49.

[3] Heb., *bathim*, lit. "tents" or "houses"; Vulg., *quasi domunculas*

[4] In 2 Kings xxiii. 8, Geiger would read "the high places of the *satyrs*" (שעירים).

of the Lord? Every honest reader must admit that there are inexplicable difficulties and uncertainties in these ancient histories, and that our knowledge of the exact circumstances—especially in all that regards the priests and Levites, who, in the Chronicles, are their own ecclesiastical historians—must remain extremely imperfect.

And what can be meant by the clause that the degraded priests of the old high places, though they were not allowed to serve at the great altar, yet "did eat of the *unleavened bread* among their brethren"? Unleavened bread was only eaten at the Passover; and when there *was* a Passover, was eaten by all alike. Perhaps the reading for "unleavened bread" should be (priestly) "portions"—a reading found by Geiger in an old manuscript.

Continuing his work, Josiah defiled Tophet;[1] took away the horses given by the kings of Judah to the sun, which were stabled beside the chamber of the eunuch Nathan-Melech in the precincts;[2] and burnt the sun-chariots in the fire. He removed the altars to the stars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz,[3] and ground them to powder. He also destroyed those of his grandfather Manasseh in the two Temple courts—which we supposed to have been removed by Manasseh in his repentance—and threw the dust into the Kedron. He defiled the idolatrous shrines reared by Solomon to the deities of Sidon, Ammon, and Moloch, broke the pillars, cut down the Asherim, and filled their places

[1] Usually derived (as by Selden and Milton) from *toph*, "drum," but perhaps from *tuph* (to *spit* in sign of abhorrence).

[2] *Parvar*—perhaps "open portico." Renan connects the word with the Greek περίβολος. On horses dedicated to the sun, see Xen. *Cyrop.*, viii. 3, 5, 12; *Anab.*, iv. 5.

[3] See Zeph. i. 5; Jer. xix. 13, xxxii. 29.

with dead men's bones.[1] Travelling northwards, he burnt, destroyed, and stamped to powder the altars and the Asherim at Bethel, and burnt upon the altars the remains found in the sepulchres,[2] only leaving undisturbed the remains of the old prophet from Judah, and of the prophet of Samaria.[3] He then destroyed the other Samaritan shrines, exercising an undisputed authority over the Northern Kingdom. The mixed inhabitants did not interfere with his proceedings; and in the declining fortunes of Nineveh, the Assyrian viceroy—if there was one—did not dispute his authority. Lastly, in accordance with the fierce injunction of Deut. xvii. 2–5, "he slew all the priests of the high places" on their own altars, burnt men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

It is very difficult, with the milder notions which we have learnt from the spirit of the Gospel, to look with approval on the recrudescence of the Elijah-spirit displayed by the last proceeding. But many centuries were to elapse, even under the Gospel Dispensation, before men learnt the sacred principle of the early Christians that "violence is hateful to God." Josiah must be judged by a more lenient judgment, and he was obeying a mandate found in the new Book of the Law. But the question arises whether the fierce

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 13: "The Mount of Corruption"; Vulg., *Mons offensionis*; LXX., *τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ Μοσθάθ*. Some conjecture that *Maschith* may be a derisive change for some word which meant "anointing" (from being the *Oil* Mountain, *Har ham-mischchah*).

[2] In burning the bones of the dead, he violated all Jewish feeling. Amos (ii. 1) had severely rebuked this form of revenge and insult even in the case of the heathen King of Moab. Bones defiled the touch (Num. xix. 16; Herod., iv. 73). Josiah's question at Bethel was, "What *pillar* is that?" (*tsiyun*). LXX., *σκόπελον*. Comp. Gen. xxxv. 20.

[3] 1 Kings xiii. 29–31.

commands of Deuteronomy were ever intended to be taken *au pied de la lettre.* May not Deut. xiii. 6–18 have been intended to express in a concrete but ideal form the spirit of execration to be entertained towards idolatry? Perhaps in thinking so we are only guilty of an anachronism, and are applying to the seventh century before Christ the feelings of the nineteenth century after Christ.

After this Josiah ordered the people to keep a Deuteronomic Passover, such as we are told—and as all the circumstances prove—had not been kept from the days of the Judges. The Chronicler revels in the details of this Passover, and tells us that Josiah gave the people thirty thousand lambs and kids, and three thousand bullocks; and his priests gave two thousand six hundred small cattle, and three hundred oxen; and the chief of the Levites gave the Levites five thousand small cattle, and five hundred oxen. He goes on to describe the slaying, sprinkling of blood, flaying, roasting, boiling in pots, pans, and caldrons, and attention paid to the burnt-offerings and the fat;[1] but neither the historians nor the chroniclers, either here or anywhere else, say one word about the Day of Atonement, or seem aware of its existence. It belongs to the Post-Exilic Priestly Code, and is not alluded to in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Continuing his task, he put away them that had familiar spirits (*oboth*), and the wizards, and the *teraphim*, with a zeal shown by no king before or after him; but Jehovah "turned not from the fierceness of His anger, because of all the provocations which Manasseh had provoked Him withal." Evil, alas! is more diffusive, and in some senses more permanent, than good, because of the perverted bias of human nature. Judah and

[1] 2 Chron. xxxv. 1–19.

Jerusalem had been radically corrupted by the apostate son of Hezekiah, and it may be that the sudden and high-handed reformation enforced by his grandson depended too exclusively on the external impulse given to it by the king to produce deep effects in the hearts of the people. Certain it is that even Jeremiah—though he was closely connected with the finders of the book, had perhaps been present when the solemn league and covenant was taken in the Temple, and lived through the reformation in which he probably took a considerable part—was profoundly dissatisfied with the results. It is sad and singular that such should have been the case; for in the first flush of the new enthusiasm he had written, "Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, saying, 'Obey My voice.'"[1] Nay, it has been inferred that he was even an itinerant preacher of the newly found law; for he writes: "And the Lord said unto me, 'Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.'"[2]

The style of Deuteronomy, as is well known, shows remarkable affinities with the style of Jeremiah. Yet it is clear that after the death of Josiah the prophet

[1] Jer. xi. 3, 4. Since, in this part of my subject, I make frequent reference to the prophecies of Jeremiah which are indispensable to the right understanding of the history, I may here say that modern critics (Cheyne and others) arrange them as follows:—

In the reign of *Josiah*, Jer. ii. 1–iii. 5, iii. 6–vi. 30, vii. 1–ix. 25, **xi. 1–17.**

In the reign of *Jehoiakim*, xxvi. 2–6, xlvi. 2–12, **xxv., xxxv.**, and possibly xvi. 1, xviii. 19–27, xiv., xv., xviii., xi. 18–xii. **17.**

In the reign of *Jehoiachin*, x. 17–23, xiii.

In the reign of *Zedekiah*, xxii.–xxiv., xxvii.–**xxix. 1–11 (?), lii.**

In the *Exile*, xxxix.–xliv.

[2] See Cheyne, *Jeremiah*, p. 56, *id.* 6.

became utterly disillusioned with the outcome of the whole movement. It proved itself to be at once evanescent and unreal. The people would not give up their beloved local shrines.[1] The law, as Habakkuk says (i. 4), became torpid; judgment went not forth to victory; the wicked compassed about the righteous, and judgment was perverted. It was easy to obey the external regulations of Deuteronomy; it was far more difficult to be true to its noble moral precepts. The reformation of Josiah, so violent and radical, proved to be only skin-deep; and Jeremiah, with bitter disappointment, found it to be so. External decency might be improved, but rites and forms are nothing to Him who searcheth the heart.[2] There was, in fact, an inherent danger in the place assumed by the newly discovered book. "Since it was regarded as a State authority, there early arose a kind of book-science, with its pedantic pride and erroneous learned endeavours to interpret and apply the Scriptures. At the same time there arose also a new kind of hypocrisy and idolatry of the letter, through the new protection which the State gave to the religion of the book acknowledged by the law. Thus scholastic wisdom came into conflict with genuine prophecy."[3]

How entirely the improvement of outward worship failed to improve men's hearts the prophet testifies.[4] "The sin of Judah," he says, "is written with a pen of

[1] Canon Cheyne shows that even Mohammed could not persuade the Qurashites wholly to give up their black stone at the Kaaba, and their dolmens and sacred trees (*id.* 103). He left the *auçab*, or sacrificial stones (*matstseboth*), though he warns his followers against them (*Quran*, v. 92).

[2] Jer. xvii. 9–11.

[3] Ewald, *The Prophets*, iii. 63, 64.

[4] Jer. xvii. 1–4.

iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the tablets of their hearts, and upon the horns of their altars, and their Asherim by the green trees[1] upon the high hills. O My mountain in the field, I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in Mine eyes, which shall burn for ever." While Josiah lived this apostasy was secret; but as soon as he died the people "turned again to folly,"[2] and committed all the old idolatries except the worship of Moloch. There arose a danger lest even the moderate ritualism of Deuteronomy should be perverted and exaggerated into mere formality. In the energy of his indignation against this abuse, Jeremiah has to uplift his voice against any trust even in the most decided injunctions of this newly discovered law. He was "a second Amos upon a higher platform." The Deuteronomic Law did not as yet exhibit the concentrated sacerdotalism and ritualism which mark the Priestly Code, to which it is far superior in every way. It is still prophetic in its tone. It places social interests above rubrics of worship. It expresses the fundamental religious thought "that Jehovah is in no sense inaccessible; that He can be approached immediately by all, and without sacerdotal intervention; that He asks nothing for Himself, but asks it as a religious duty that man should render

[1] The Qurashites and other heathen Arabs accounted holy a large green tree, and every year had a sacrifice in its honour. "On the way to Hunain we called to God's Messenger (Mohammed) that he should appoint for us such trees. But he was terrified, and said, 'Lord God, Lord God! Ye speak even as the Israelites ye are still in ignorance,—thus are heathen enslaved'" (Vakïdi, *Book of the Campaigns of God's Messenger*, quoted by Cheyne, *Jeremiah*, p. 103, from Wellhausen).

[2] Psalm lxxxv. 8.

unto man what is right; that His Will lies not in any known height, but in the moral sphere which is known and understood by all."[1] The book ordained certain sacrifices; yet Jeremiah says with startling emphasis, "To what purpose cometh there to Me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet calamus from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasant unto Me."[2] Therefore He bids them, "Put your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices, and eat them as flesh"—*i.e.*, "Throw all your offerings into a mass, and eat them at your pleasure (regardless of sacerdotal rules): they have neither any inherent sanctity nor any secondary importance from the characters of the offerers."[3] And in a still more remarkable passage, "*For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices:* but this thing I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice.'"[4]

Nay, in the most emphatic ordinances of Deuteronomy he found that the people had created a new peril. They were putting a particularistic trust in Jehovah, as though He were a respecter of persons, and they His favourites. They fancied, as in the days of Micah, that it was enough for them to claim His name, and

[1] Deut. xxx. 11–14. See Wellhausen, p. 165.

[2] Jer. vi. 20. The passages of Jeremiah which seem of a different spirit may have been added by later hands—*e.g.*, xxxiii. 18, which is not in the LXX.

[3] Jer. vii. 21; Ewald; and Cheyne, *l.c.* 120. So the Jews seem to have understood it, for they appoint this passage to be read on the *Haphtara* after the *Parashah* about sacrifices from Leviticus.

[4] Jer. vii. 22, 23. This alone would show that Jeremiah did not (as earlier critics thought) *write* "Deteronomy," in spite of the numerous close resemblances in phraseology. Thus, Jeremiah often denounces the priests (i. 18, ii. 8–26, iv. 9, v. 31, viii. 1, xiii. 13, xxxii. 32). Cheyne, p. 82.

bribe Him with sacrifices.[1] Above all, they boasted of and relied upon the possession of His Temple, and placed their trust on the punctual observance of external ceremonies. All these sources of vain confidence it was the duty of Jeremiah rudely to shatter to pieces. Standing at the gates of the Lord's House, he cried: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, 'The Temple of the Lord! the Temple of the Lord! the Temple of the Lord, are these!' Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods; and come and stand before Me in this house, whereupon My name is called, and say, 'We are delivered,' that ye may do all these abominations? Is this house become a den of robbers in your eyes? But go ye now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I caused My name to dwell at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people. I will do unto this house as I have done to Shiloh; and I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out the whole house of Ephraim."[2]—Yet all hope was not extinguished for ever. The Scythian might disappear; the Babylonian might come in his place; but one day there should be a new covenant of pardon and restitution; and as had been promised in Deuteronomy, "*all* should know Jehovah, from the least to the greatest."

At last he even prophesies the entire future annulment of the solemn covenant made on the basis of Deuteronomy, and says that Jehovah will make a new covenant with His people, not according to the covenant which He made with their fathers.[3] And in his

[1] Mic. iii. 11.
[2] Jer. vii. 4, 8–15.
[3] Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.

final estimate of King Josiah after his death, he does not so much as mention his reformation, his iconoclasm, his sweeping zeal, or his enforcement of the Deuteronomic Law, but only says to Jehoiakim :—

"'Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice?—then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. *Was not this to know Me?' saith the Lord.*"[1]

Whether because its methods were too violent, or because it only affected the surface of men's lives, or because the people were not really ripe for it, or because no reformation can ever succeed which is enforced by autocracy, not spread by persuasion and conviction, it is certain that the first glamour of Josiah's movement ended in disillusionment. A religion violently imposed from without as a state-religion naturally tends to hypocrisy and externalism. What Jehovah required was, not a changed method of worship, but a changed heart; and this the reformation of Josiah did not produce. It has often been so in human history. Failure seems to be written on many of the most laudable human efforts. Nevertheless, truth ultimately prevails. Isaiah was murdered, and Urijah, and Jeremiah. Savonarola was burnt, and Huss, and many a martyr more; but the might of priestcraft was at last crippled, to be revived, we hope, no more, either by open violence or secret apostasy.

"Then to side with Truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they have denied."

[1] Jer. xxii. 15, 16.

NOTE TO CHAPTER XXXI.

"Jehovah is our Lawgiver."—ISA. xxxiii. 22.

WHAT was the Book of the Law which Hilkiah found in the Temple?

The great majority of eminent modern critics have now come to the conclusion that it was the kernel of the Book of Deuteronomy. Nor is this in any sense a mere modern notion. It occurs as far back as St. Jerome (*Adv. Jovin.*, i. 5) and St. Chrysostom (*Hom. in Matt.*, ix., p. 135, B. See W. Rob. Smith, p. 258).

It is no part of my immediate duty to argue this question, but I may state that the arguments for this conclusion are partly historical, partly literary, and partly depend on internal evidence.

I. As regards the *literary* argument, it is maintained that—

1. The full, rounded, rhetorical style of Deuteronomy, so widely different from the extreme dryness of other parts of the Torah, could not have been as yet developed in the days of Moses, and required the slow training of centuries for its perfection. It is a new phenomenon, and differs widely from earlier prophetic writings, such as those of Amos and Hosea.

2. The style and language of the Deuteronomist are so marked, that they can scarcely escape an intelligent reader of the English Version. Riehm enumerates sixty-four characteristic words or phrases. Their significance lies in the fact that they express obvious ideas, and are not names for special objects, which force a writer to use peculiar words. The style closely resembles in many phrases and particulars the style of Jeremiah, and of him alone among the prophets. "Even supposing that no historic text," it has been said, "taught us that the articles of Smalkald were the work of Luther, we should still have the right to affirm that these articles closely resemble the ideas of Luther, and could hardly have been published without his cognisance."

II. As regards *historical* evidence, we observe that—

1. No author earlier than Josiah shows any acquaintance with Deuteronomy: after that date, proofs of such knowledge abound.

2. The Book of Deuteronomy insisted with reiterated emphasis on the centralisation of worship. All its ordinances are framed with a view to promote this end. But we have seen that there

is not a trace of any belief that local shrines were prohibited earlier than the reign of Hezekiah, who certainly would have defended his boldness by appeal to a written law if he had known of such as existing.

III. As regards *internal* evidence, we see that—

1. Many passages and injunctions of the Book of Deuteronomy differ entirely from those found in the old Book of the Covenant which forms the most ancient nucleus of Exodus (Exod. xx. 22–xxiii. 33).

2. Even the most conservative English critics—even those who, with any pretence to competent knowledge, argue against the more advanced conclusions of the Higher Criticism—cannot help admitting that at least three codes, which in many, and in some fundamental, respects differ widely from each other, and which make no reference to each other, are found in our present Pentateuch—viz., that of the Book of the Covenant, that of the Deuteronomist (D.), and that of the Priestly writer (P.). All three may contain elements as old as the days of Moses; but most critics (with scarcely an exception in Germany) now believe that the Deuteronomic Code, in its present form, is not earlier than the date of Josiah's reformation (*circ.* B.C. 621); and the Priestly Codex (whatever older documents may exist in it) not older, in its present form, than about the time of Ezra (B.C. 444). Dillmann, Kittel, and in his later days Delitzsch, have been of necessity compelled to give up the views that, in their present form, D. and P. are as ancient as the days of Moses. The last German critic who held that Moses wrote our present Pentateuch was Keil (*d.* 1888). Canon Cheyne argues for the late date of this misnamed "Deuteronomy," on the grounds that the authors (1) used documents manifestly later than Moses; (2) alluded to events which only occurred long after Moses; and (3) expressed ideas which, in the age of Moses, are not psychologically possible.

The Book of Deuteronomy consists mainly of an historical introduction, probably added later (i. 1–5); Moses' *first* discourse (i. 6—iv. 40); Moses' *second* discourse (iv. 44–xxvi.); a section marked specially by blessings and curses (xxvii–xxix.); a *third* discourse of Moses (xxix. 2–xxx. 20); his farewell (xxxi. 1–13); his song (xxxi. 14–xxxii. 47); conclusion, narrating his blessing and death (xxxii. 48–xxxiv. 12).

I have no space here to enter fully into the arguments which

seem decisive as to the date of the main part of Deuteronomy. Those who desire to see them must study Colenso, *The Pentateuch*, pt. iii.; Reuss, *Hist. Sainte et la Loi*, i. 154–211; W. Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, lect. xvi.; Kuenen, *The Hexateuch*, E. T., 1886; Kittel, *Gesch. d. Hebräer*, pp. 43–59; Cheyne, *Jeremiah*, pp. 48–86; S. R. Driver, *s.v.* "Deuteronomy" (Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, new ed.); W. Aldis Wright, *The Documents of the Hexateuch*, pp. lvii.–lxxix. The name "Deuteronomy" (or "second law") arises from the mistaken rendering of the LXX. and Vulgate in Deut. xvii. 18.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEATH OF JOSIAH

B.C. 608

2 KINGS xxiii. 29, 30

"Howl, O fir tree; for the cedar is fallen."—ZECH. xi. 2.

JOSIAH survived by thirteen years the reformation and covenant which are the chief events of his reign. He lived in prosperity and peace. He did justice and judgment; the poor and needy flourished under his royal protection; and it was well with him. It seemed as if the Deuteronomic blessings on faithfulness to its law were about to be abundantly fulfilled, when "the azure calm of heaven" was suddenly shattered, and "down came the thunderbolt." The great and victorious Assurbanipal of Assyria had died, and left his power to weaker successors. Meanwhile, Egypt was growing in power and splendour under Pharaoh Necho II. (B.C. 612–596), the sixth king of the twenty-fifth or Saitic dynasty. He nearly anticipated M. de Lesseps in making the Suez Canal,[1] and perhaps actually anticipated Vasco de Gama in rounding the Cabo Tormentoso, or Cape of Good Hope, in a three years' voyage. He was fired by the ambitious dream

[1] He was forced to desist by a fearful mortality among the labourers

of succeeding the Assyrians as the chief power in the world, or at any rate of seizing part of the dominions which they had conquered.[1] Accordingly, in B.C. 608, he went up against the King of Assyria to the river Euphrates. The Chronicler says that his destination was Carchemish, on the Euphrates, and some have conjectured that the vague phrase "against the King of Assyria" is incorrect, and that, as Josephus states, he was really marching against the Medes and Babylonians after the fall of Nineveh.[2]

With this expedition Josiah was not greatly concerned. He may have begun his reign as the vassal of Assurbanipal; but if so, it is probable that he had long since ceased to pay tribute to a power which was tottering to its fall under the attacks of Scythians and Babylonians. He had availed himself of the disorganisation of the Assyrian power to re-establish some, at least, of the old authority of the House of David over the Northern Kingdom, and perhaps he only undertook the desperate expedient of withstanding the northward march of the Egyptian host under the notion that either on the march or on his return the Pharaoh intended to subjugate Palestine to Egypt.

Pharaoh Necho II., among his other achievements, had created a powerful fleet,[3] and it is nearly certain that he did not advance along the coast of Palestine, but made his way by sea to Acco or Dor.[4] Here he received the news that Josiah meant to block his path

[1] *Circ.* B.C. 611–605. Herod., ii. 158, 159, iv. 42. Psamatik, the father of Necho, was perhaps a Lybian. He established his sway over all Egypt displacing the Assyrians.

[2] *Antt.*, X. v. 1.

Herod., ii. 158. His father Psamatik had left him an adequate army of natives and mercenaries.

[4] Herodotus says of his ships: Αἱ μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ βορηίῃ θαλάσσῃ ἐναυήθησαν.

at Megiddo, on the plain of Jezreel. That plain has been the great and only possible battle-field of Palestine, from the revolt in which Barak destroyed the host of Jabin,[1] to that in which Tryphon met Jonathan the Maccabee,[2] and Kleber in 1799 defeated twenty-five thousand Turks with three thousand French.

The Chronicler here adds a very remarkable incident.[3] Necho, like Joash of Israel in former days, did not care to fight with the poor little King of Judah—or at any rate did not wish to do so at present, when he was on his way to the greater encounter. He therefore sent an embassy to Josiah, saying, "What have I to do with thee, King of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war.[4] For God [Elohim] commanded me [in a dream] to make haste.[5] Forbear, then, from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not."

The conjecture "in a dream" is not unlikely, nor is it in disaccord with other events in the annals of the Pharaohs and the Sargonidæ of Assyria.[6] We may indeed be surprised that an Egyptian Pharaoh should profess to deliver to a Jewish king the messages of Elohim, though we have seen something like this in the case of the Rabshakeh.[7] The variation in 1 Esdras i. 26–28 is curious and interesting. We are there told

[1] Judg. iv. 23; 1 Sam. xxix. 1–11; 1 Kings xx. 26; 2 Kings xxiii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxv. 22; Rev. xvi. 16 (Armageddon). Herodotus confuses it with Migdol (Μάγδολον).

[2] 1 Macc. xii. 49; Jos., *Antt.*, XIII. vi. 2.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxv. 20–22.

[4] According to 1 Esdras i. 25–32, "for upon Euphrates is my war."

[5] Klostermann, in 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, reads *bachalôm*, "in a dream," instead of "to make haste."

[6] Gen. xli. 1; Herod., ii. 188; *Records of the Past*, ix. 52.

[7] 2 Kings xviii. 25.

that the message was sent to Josiah, not only by Pharaoh Necho, who had sent to say "The Lord is with me hastening me forward: depart from me, and be not against the Lord," but also by "the prophet Jeremy." Josephus frankly ascribes the error of Josiah to destiny, as though he had been infatuated by the dementation which the Greeks attributed to Atè.[1]

This, however, is not likely; for it is clear that Jeremiah, though not mentioned in the Book of Kings, must have had a strong influence over the mind of Josiah, whom he loved, whose views he shared, in whose religious revolution he had taken part. Further, we do not read of any warning recorded by the prophet himself; and had he uttered one, it would certainly have been mentioned, when he committed his prophecies to writing twenty-three years after their commencement. A warning of which the neglect had led to fatal issues would have been so decisive a confirmation of Jeremiah's prophetic insight that it could not have been passed over in silence.

Indeed, Jeremiah may have shared the conviction which, founded on imperfect generalisation, perhaps dazzled the unfortunate king to his ruin. Josiah had accepted the Book of Deuteronomy with the whole strength of his belief, and the Book of Deuteronomy had proclaimed to Israel as the reward of faithfulness this promise: "And it shall come to pass that Jehovah, thy God, shall set thee on high above all the nations of the earth. Jehovah shall cause thine enemies which rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways."[2] In the strength of that

[1] *Antt.*, X. v. 1: Τῆς πεπρωμένης οἶμαι εἰς τοῦτ' αὐτὸν παρορμησάσης.
[2] Deut. xxviii. 1–8.

promise, Josiah was perhaps saying to himself, in the language of the Psalms, that Jehovah could not fail to save His anointed, and dash His enemies to pieces under His feet;[1] in the language, perhaps, of later days, that the sound of a shaken leaf should chase them, and they should flee when none pursued.[2]

Alas! such passages do not apply invariably to our wordly fortunes! God's promises are general. The individual must be considered apart from the universal in the region of spiritual and eternal blessings. In the affairs of earth the wicked often seem to be in prosperity, while the righteous are overwhelmed by all God's waves and storms. Further, Josiah evidently received a warning—a warning which professed to come, and really came, from God[3]—whether uttered by Pharaoh or by Jeremiah. And in this instance Josiah had sought war; he had not been forced into it. It was not for him to go out of his way to champion the cause either of cruel Assyria or vaunting Babylon.

The result was entire disenchantment. No more disheartening and disastrous calamity could have happened to the kingdom, which had just begun to struggle out of the slough of idolatry and humiliation.

Heedless of the message he had received, strong in mistaken hopes, Josiah opposed his poor, weak forces to the powerful host of renovated Egypt. The result was instantaneous ruin.[4] Judah was defeated and scattered without a blow,—Necho came, saw, conquered. Josiah, according to the present record of the Chronicles,

[1] Psalm xx. 6, xviii. 29–50.

[2] Lev. xxvi. 36.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxv. 22: "hearkened not *to the words of Necho from the mouth of God.*"

[4] "When he had *seen* him." Comp. 2 Kings xiv. 8.

like Ahab, "disguised himself"[1] and went into the battle; and as he drove from rank to rank an Egyptian archer drew a bow at a venture, and smote him while he was putting his forces in array. The arrow-point brought conviction too late. Josiah saw his error; he knew that his own death involved the rout of his army. He sounded a retreat, and said to his servants, "Bear me away to my travelling chariot, for I am sore wounded."[2] He died at Megiddo, where his ancestor Ahaziah had died before him from the arrow-wounds of Jehu's pursuers. His servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo. The famous plain of Esdraelon had already witnessed two great victories—that of Barak over Sisera, and that of Gideon over the Midianites; and one deplorable defeat—that of Saul by the Philistines. It was now darkened by a catastrophe even more sad.[3]

When that chariot, accompanied by its wailing escort, entered the gates of Jerusalem, with the routed army of Judah behind it, the feeling of the people must have resembled that of the Athenians when the news reached them that Lysander had destroyed their whole fleet at Ægospotami, and the long wail went thrilling up through that sleepless night from the Peiræus all along the Makra Teichè to the Parthenon and the Acropolis. And there followed such a mourning as the land had never known before. It had begun at Megiddo and Hadadrimmon, leaving the sad memory of its hopeless

[1] 1 Esdras i. 25; and LXX., "firmly resolved," "strengthened himself," as in 2 Chron. xxv. 11.

[2] Jos., *Antt.*, X. v. 1; and 2 Chron. xxxv. 23; 1 Esdras i. 30.

[3] The fortunes of the Jews again prevailed in this plain in the days of Holofernes (Judith vii. 3); but they were defeated there by Placidus (Jos., *B. J.*, IV. i. 8).

intensity. It was renewed at Jerusalem when they buried the king in his own sepulchre. "The land mourned, every family apart; the family of the House of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the House of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the House of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remained, every family apart, and their wives apart."[1] "And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day, and they were made an institution in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations."[2] Not even for heroic David, or royal Solomon, or pious Asa, or prosperous Jehoshaphat had there been so loud a dirge.

But, alas! there was cause for far deeper sorrow than the loss of a prince, however able, however beloved. The dead was dead. Natural sorrow for the bereavement of the people would soon be healed by time, but behind the passing affliction lay a great fear and a great reaction.

A great fear,—for now a southern foe was added to the northern. Jeremiah and other prophets had warned Israel of the peril from the North. When the Scythian wave "rolled shoreward, struck and was dissipated,"

[1] Zech. xii. 11–13 (comp. Jer. xxii. 10, 18). No such place as Hadadrimmon is known, though there is a Rummâne not far from Megiddo. Jerome (*Comm. in Zach.*) identifies it with a place which he calls Maximianopolis. Wellhausen (*Skizzen*, 192) thinks that the mourning is compared to some wail over the god Hadadrimmon, like the wailing for Tammuz. Jonathan and Jarchi say that Hadadrimmon was the son of Tabrimmon, who opposed Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25. Jeremiah's elegy has probably perished. It would have been most interesting had it been preserved. Lam. iv. is too vague to have been this lost poem.

when the source of Assyrian terror seemed to be drying up, worldlings may have felt inclined to laugh at Jeremiah. But now it was evident that, sooner or later, the Chaldæans would be as formidable as their predecessors, and out of the serpent's egg was breaking forth a cockatrice. The uncalled-for attempt of Josiah to bar the path of the new and mighty Pharaoh had also added Egypt to the list of formidable enemies. For the present the Pharaoh had passed on to the Euphrates; but whether he returned victorious or defeated, his troops could not but be a source of danger to the little kingdom, which would henceforth be helpless between the overwhelming forces of its foes.

If such were the fears of the timid and the pessimistic, still deeper was the disheartenment of the faithful. Josiah had been the most obedient, the most religious, of all the kings of Judah from childhood upwards. Where, then, were Jehovah's old loving-kindnesses which He sware unto David in His truth? Had God forgotten to be gracious? Had He hidden away His mercy in displeasure? Where were the blessings of the newly discovered Book of the Law, if the curse fell on its most earnest votary? Where was Huldah's promise that he should be gathered to his fathers in peace, if he was carried back dead from the field of fruitless battle? There can be little doubt that the apparent blight which had fallen on unavailing righteousness hastened the reaction of the subsequent reigns. Many might be inclined to cry out with even Jeremiah in his moments of overwhelming despondency, "Ah, Lord God! surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'Ye shall have peace'; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul."[1] "O Lord,

[1] Jer. iv. 10.

Thou has deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am a derision daily, every one mocketh me. Whenever I speak, I must shout, I must cry violence and spoil; for the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily."[1]

But man judges partially and judges amiss. God's ways are not as man's ways. God sees the whole; He sees the future; He sees things as they are. Through defeat, through captivity, through multiform affliction, lay the path to the final deliverance of the nation from the grosser forms of idolatry. When they wept as they remembered Zion, when they took down their harps from the willows by the water-courses of Babylon to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, they turned again—and at last with their whole heart—to God their Saviour, who had done so great things for them;—until the grey secret lingering in the East was brightened by the Morning Star, and there was revealed to the world a True Israel, and a New Jerusalem, wherein the Lord should be King for evermore.

[1] Jer. xx. 7, 8.

CHAPTER XXXIII

JEHOAHAZ

B.C. 608

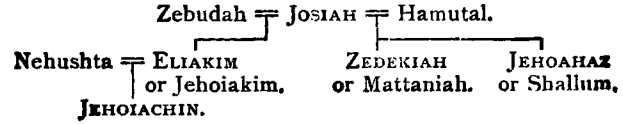
2 KINGS xxiii. 31—33

"I went by, and, lo! he was gone: I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found."—PSALM xxxvii. 36.

IT was under the disastrous circumstances which attended his father's death at Megiddo that Jehoahaz began to reign. There is some confusion about the four sons of Josiah, whom the Chronicler calls Johanan, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Shallum.[1] From Jer. xxii. 11, it appears that Jehoahaz was the royal name taken on his anointing by Shallum, the third son.[2] If so, he cannot be identified with Johanan, the firstborn, as in the margin of our version. Further, it appears from our historians that Jehoahaz was twenty-three at his succession, and was therefore younger than Jehoiakim who (three months later) succeeded him at the age of

[1] Chron. iii. 15.

[2] He is named "fourth," but he was older than his brothers Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (2 Kings xxiii. 31, xxiv. 18). The genealogy is as follows:—



twenty-five. Jehoahaz was the own brother of Zedekiah, Jehoiakim being his half-brother by another mother (Zebudah).

We do not know for what reason he was preferred by "the people of the land" to his elder brother Eliakim or Jehoiakim. It was probably because they regarded him as a prince of eminent courage and ability. The high hopes which the nation conceived of him may be seen in the pathetic elegy of Ezek. xix. :—

"Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, and say,—
What was thy mother? A lioness!
Amidst lions she couched,
In the midst of the young lions she nourished her whelps.
She brought up one of her whelps: he became a young lion;
He learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.
The nations heard of him;
In their pit was he taken,[1]
And they brought him with hooks into the land of Egypt."[2]

We see, too, that he was to an eminent degree the darling of the nation in the still more plaintive wail of Jeremiah which will be quoted later.

The fact that Shallum solemnly changed his name to Jehoahaz ("Jehovah taketh hold"),[3] and that the people of the land not only "made him king in his father's stead," but also "anointed him," points to a disputed succession.[4] High hopes were conceived of

[1] An allusion to the Syrian mode of hunting the lion by driving it with cries into a concealed pit (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, 118; Cheyne, 140).

[2] Ezek. xix. 1–4.

[3] The name Shallum means "recompense." It may have been regarded as ill-omened, since the King of Israel who bore this rare name had only reigned a month.

[4] The Talmud says that kings were only anointed in special cases (*Keritoth*, f. 5, 2; Grätz, ii. 328).

him; but he hardly had a chance of fulfilling them, for he was only permitted to reign three months. What were the events of those months we do not know. Jehoahaz must have disappointed any hopes which may have been formed of him by the religious party; for dear as he was to them, the historians record of him that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done," although they specify no particular offence. The same sad verdict is passed on all his four successors; but Josephus says even more emphatically of Jehoahaz that he was impious and impure.[1]

He must have shown some activity in other respects, or else Ezekiel would hardly have said that "the nations heard of him," and that "he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men." Over all his deeds, whatever they may have been, "the iniquity of oblivion has blindly scattered her poppy," and he fell a victim to the great world-movements of those troublous times.

For Pharaoh, after his defeat of Josiah at Megiddo, proceeded to make himself master of Syria and Palestine. He took Cadytis, which Herodotus calls "a large city of Syria,"[2] and which—since it cannot here mean Gaza, as in Herod., iii. 5—has been identified by some with Kadesh. Thence he marched to Carchemish, on the right bank of the Euphrates,[3] none venturing to check him, till "once more, after the lapse of nine centuries, Egyptian garrisons looked down on that historic stream."[4] On his return he stopped at Riblah, on the

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, X. v. 2: Ἀσεβὴς καὶ μιαρὸς τὸν τρόπον.
[2] Herod., ii. 159.
[3] Mr. G. Smith identifies Carchemish with Jerablûs.
[4] Cheyne, *Jeremiah*, p. 127.

Orontes,[1] to consolidate his Syrian conquests; and there he learnt that, without consulting him, the people of Jerusalem had made Jehoahaz their king. Perhaps he heard enough of the warlike prowess of Jehoahaz to make him resent this act of independence. After his three months' campaign he sent for Jehoahaz to Riblah, and the unhappy prince had no choice but to obey. Possibly the Egyptian party in Jerusalem, headed by his disappointed elder brother Eliakim, may have intrigued against him with Pharaoh Necho. When he reached Riblah, he was unceremoniously deposed; and though we may hope that the expression of Ezekiel, that "they brought him with *hooks* into the land of Egypt," belongs to the metaphor of the captured lion's whelp, it is certain that he was taken to the banks of the Nile as a fettered captive, never to return. How long his miserable life was protracted, or how he was treated in Egypt, we do not know. The sun of the young prince went down in darkness while it was yet day. No king of Judah before him had died in prison and in exile, and the calamity smote heavily the heart of his people. Egypt was not to escape—shortly thereafter—the doom of violence and pride; but whether the young Jewish king had died meanwhile of a broken heart, or whether he dragged on to hoar hairs his maimed life, or whether he was murdered in his dungeon, no man knew. One thing only was clear to the sad prophet—that he would never return.

"Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him:

[1] Comp. 2 Kings xxv. 20, 21. The old Hittite capital of Riblah was a convenient halting-place on the road between Babylon and Jerusalem. It was on the northernmost boundary of Palestine towards Damascus (Amos vi. 14).

but weep ye sore for him that is gone away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. For thus saith Jehovah concerning Shallum, the son of Josiah, King of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place: 'He shall not return thither any more: but in the place whither they have led him captive there shall he die, and he shall see this land no more.'"[1]

To show his absolute power over Judah and Jerusalem, Pharaoh Necho not only deposed and fettered their king, but put the whole land under a yearly tribute of one hundred talents of silver (about £40,000) and a talent of gold (about £4,000).[2]

Even this comparatively small sum was a heavy burden for so greatly afflicted and impoverished a country, and Pharaoh further imposed on them a vassal to see that it was duly extorted. This was Eliakim, the eldest living son of Josiah. There was nothing left to plunder in the Temple or the palace, and therefore the exaction had to be borne by the taxed and suffering people.

[1] Jer. xxii. 10–12.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 3; 1 Esdras i. 36. The smallness of the tribute proves the impoverishment of the land. Sennacherib demanded from Hezekiah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty of gold; and Menahem paid one thousand talents of silver to Tiglath-Pileser.

CHAPTER XXXIV

JEHOIAKIM

B.C. 608—597

2 KINGS xxiii. 36—xxiv. 7

"But those things that are recorded of him, and of his uncleanness and impiety, are written in the Chronicles of the Kings."—1 ESDRAS i. 42.

"When Jehoiakim succeeded to the throne, he said, 'My predecessors knew not how to provoke God.'"—*Sanhedrin*, f. 103, 2.

"There is no strange handwriting on the wall,
Through all the midnight hum no threatening call,
Nor on the marble floor the stealthy fall
Of fatal footsteps. All is safe.—Thou fool,
The avenging deities are shod with wool!"

W. ALLEN BUTLER.

ELIAKIM succeeded to the throne at the age of twenty-five under very unenviable circumstances—as a nominal king, a helpless nominee and tributary of the Pharaoh. He seems to have been thoroughly distasteful to the people; and if we may judge from the fact that Ezekiel frankly ignores him and passes from Jehoahaz to Jehoachin, he was regarded as a tax-gathering usurper nominated by an alien tyrant. For after speaking of Jehoahaz, Ezekiel says,—

"Now when she [Judah] saw that she had waited [for the restoration of Jehoahaz], and her hope was lost,

Then she took another of her whelps;[1]
A young lion she made him.
He went up and down among the lions;
He became a young lion."[2]

The historian says that Necho turned the name of Eliakim ("God will establish") to Jehoiakim ("Jehovah will establish"); but by this can hardly be meant more than that he sanctioned the change of El into Jehovah on Eliakim's installation upon the throne.

Jehoiakim is condemned in the same terms as all the other sons of Josiah. His misdoings are far more definitely recorded in the Prophets, who furnish us with details which are passed over by the historians. Some of his sins may have been due to the influence of his wife Nehushta, who was a daughter of Elnathan of Achbor, one of the princes of the heathen party. It was this Elnathan whom the king chose as a fitting ambassador to demand the extradition of the prophet Urijah from Egypt. One of the crimes with which Jehoiakim is charged is the building for himself of a sumptuous palace, and thus vainly trying to emulate the splendours of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian kings. In itself the act would not have been more wicked than it was in Solomon, whose architectural parade is dwelt upon with enthusiasm. But the circumstances were now wholly different. Solomon was at that time in all his glory, the possessor of boundless wealth, the ruler of an immense and united territory, the head of a powerful and prosperous people, the successor of an unconquered hero who had gone to his grave in peace; Jehoiakim,

[1] Not Jehoiakim, but Jehoiachin, as the sequel shows.

[2] Ezek. xix. 5–9. The allusions to Jehoiakim by Jeremiah are numerous, and all unfavourable (xxii. 13–19, xxvi. 20–23, xxxvi. 20–31, etc.).

on the other hand, had succeeded a father who had died in defeat on the field of battle, and a brother who was hopelessly pining in an Egyptian prison. The Tribes had been carried into captivity by Assyria; the nation was beaten, oppressed, and poor; the king himself possessed but a shadow of royalty. In such a condition of things it would have been his glory to maintain a watchful and strenuous activity, and to devote himself in simplicity and self-denial to the good of his people. It showed a perverted and sensuous mind to insult the misery of his subjects at such a time by feeble attempts to rival heathen potentates in costly æstheticism. But this was not all; he carried out his ignoble selfishness at the cost of oppression and wrong.[1]

It is possible that the prophet Habakkuk alludes to him in the words:—

"Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil![2] Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."[3]

The thought of the Jewish king's selfish expensiveness may have crossed the mind of Habakkuk, though the taunt is addressed directly to the Chaldæans, and especially to Nebuchadrezzar, who was at that time revelling in the beautifying of Babylon, and especially

[1] Josephus (*Antt.*, X. v. 2) is very severe on this king. He says that "he was unjust in disposition, an evil-doer, neither pious towards God nor just towards men."

[2] Perhaps an allusion to a sort of fortified palace on Ophel.

[3] Hab. ii. 9–11.

of his own royal palace. On the other hand, the rebuke, or rather the denunciation, uttered by Jeremiah against the king for this line of conduct, and for the forced labour which it required, is terribly direct.

"'Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness,
And his chambers by wrong;
That useth his neighbour's service without wages,
And giveth him not his hire;
That saith, "I will build me a wide house and spacious chambers,"
And cutteth out windows;
And it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.
Shalt thou reign because thou viest with the cedar?[1]
Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice?
Then it was well with him!
Was not this to know Me?' saith the Lord.
'But thine heart is not but for thy dishonest gain,
And for to shed innocent blood,
And for oppression and for violence to do it.'"[2]

Then follows the stern message of doom which we shall quote hereafter. The king's bad example stimulated or perhaps emulated similar folly and want of patriotism on the part of his nobles. They were shepherds who destroyed and scattered the sheep of Jehovah's pastures. But vain was their imagined security, and their ostentation. The judgment was imminent.[3]

"O inhabitress of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars," exclaims the prophet in bitter mockery, "how greatly wilt thou groan when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!"[4]

[1] The text is perhaps corrupt. Two MSS. of the LXX. read "because thou viest *with Ahab*," and the Vatican MSS. has "*with Ahas*." Cheyne adopts the former reading.

[2] Jer. xxii. 13–17.

[3] Jer. xxiii. 1.

[4] Jer. xxii. 23.

But Jehoiakim's offences were deadlier than this. The Chronicler speaks of "the abominations which he did"; and some have therefore supposed that the evil state of things described by Jeremiah (xix.) refers to this reign. If so, he plunged into the idolatry which caused Judah to be shivered like a potter's vessel. Certainly he sinned grievously against God in the person of His prophets.

Jeremiah was not the only prophet who disdained the easy and traitorous popularity which was to be won by prophesying "peace, peace," when there was no peace. He had for his contemporary another messenger of God, no less boldly explicit than himself—Urijah, the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-Jearim. Jeremiah had as yet only prophesied in his humble native village of Anathoth; he had not been called upon to face "the swellings" or "the pride of Jordan."[1] Urijah had been in the fuller glare of publicity in the capital, and his bold declaration that Jerusalem should fall before Nebuchadrezzar and the Chaldæans had excited such a fury of indignation that he escaped into Egypt for his life. Surely this should have appeased the rulers, even if they chose to pay no attention to the Divine menace. For the prophets were recognised deliverers of the messages of Jehovah; and with scarcely an exception, even in the most wicked reigns, their persons had been regarded as sacrosanct. But Jehoiakim would not let Urijah escape. He sent an embassy to Necho, headed by his father-in-law Elnathan, son of Achbor, requesting his extradition. Urijah had been dragged back from Egypt, and, to the horror of the people, the king had slain him with the sword, and flung his body into the

[1] Jer. xii. 5.

graves of the common people.[1] What made this conduct more monstrous was the precedent of Micah the Morasthite. He, in the days of Hezekiah, had prophesied,—

> "Zion shall be ploughed as a field,
> And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
> And the Mountain of the House as the wooded heights."[2]

Yet so far from putting him to death, or even stirring a finger against him, the pious king had only been moved to repentance by the Divine threatenings. Thus the blood of the first martyr-prophet, if we except the case of Zechariah, had been shed by the son of Judah's most pious king. Jeremiah himself only narrowly escaped martyrdom. The precedent of Micah helped to save him, though it had not saved Urijah. He was far more powerfully protected by the patronage of the princes and the people. Standing in the Temple court, he had declared that, unless the nation repented, that house should be like Shiloh, and the city a curse to all the nations of the earth. Maddened by such words of bold rebuke, the priests and the prophets and the people had threatened him with death. But the princes took his part, and some of the people came over to them. His most powerful protector was Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, a member of a family of the utmost distinction.

Meanwhile, we must follow for a time the outward fortunes of the king and of the world.

Necho, after his successful advance, had retired to

[1] Jer. xxvi. 20–23. So far as I am aware, Bunsen stands alone in identifying Urijah with the "Zechariah" who wrote Zech. xii.–xiv. Others refer Zech. xii. 10 to the murder of Urijah.

[2] Jer. xxvi. 18.

Egypt, and Jehoiakim continued to be for three years his obsequious servant. An event of tremendous importance for the world changed the entire fortunes of Egypt and of Judah. Nineveh fell with a crash which terrified the nations. We might apply to her the language which Isaiah applies to her successor, Babylon:—

"Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the shades for thee, even the Rephaim of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall answer and say unto thee, 'Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?' . . . All the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre like an abominable branch, as the raiment of those that are slain, that are thrust through with the sword, that go down to the stones of the pit. . . . They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee . . and say, 'Is this the man that made the earth to tremble? that did shake kingdoms? that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof? that let not loose his prisoners to their home?'" [1]

Yes, Assyria had fallen like some mighty cedar in Libanus, and the nations gazed without pity and with exultation on his torn and scattered branches.

And coincident with the fate of Nineveh had been the rise of the Chaldæan power.

Nabupalussur [2] had been a general of one of the last Assyrian kings, and had been sent by him with an army to quell a Babylonian revolt. Instead of this, he seized the city and made himself king. When the

[1] Isa. xiv., *passim*.

[2] Nabu-pal-ussur, "Nebo protect the son"

final overthrow and obliteration of Nineveh had secured his power, he sent his brave and brilliant son Nebuchadrezzar[1] (B.C. 605) to secure the provinces which he had wrested from Assyria, and especially to regain possession of Carchemish, which commanded the river.

Necho marched to protect his conquests, and at Carchemish the hostile forces encountered each other in a tremendous battle,—immemorial Egypt under the representative of its age-long Pharaohs; Babylon, with her independence of yesterday, under a prince hitherto unknown, whose name was to become one of the most famous in the world. The result is described by Jeremiah (xlvi. 1–12). Egypt was hopelessly defeated. Her splendidly arrayed warriors were panic-stricken and routed; her chief heroes were dashed to pieces by the heavy maces of the Babylonians, or fled without so much as looking back. The scene was one of "Magor-missabib"—terror on every side.[2] Pharaoh's host came up like the Nile in flood with its Ethiopian hoplites and Asiatic archers; but they were driven back. The daughter of Egypt received a wound which no balm of Gilead could cure. The nations heard of her shame, and the prophet pronounced her further chastisement by the hands of Nebuchadrezzar.

[1] Nabu-kudur-ussur, "Nebo protect the crown" (Schrader, ii. 48), or "the youth" (Oppert). The portrait of Nebuchadrezzar—this is the proper spelling, as generally in Jeremiah—is preserved for us on a black cameo which he presented to the god Merodach. It is now in the Berlin Museum, and shows strong but not cruel or ignoble characteristics. It is copied in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, ii. 1067. The Jews, as they were fond of doing to their enemies, made insulting puns on his name. Thus in the *Vayyikra Rabba* (Wünsche, *Bibl. Rabb.*) the Three Children are represented as saying to him, "You are Neboo-cad-netser: bark [*nabach*] like a dog; swell like a water-jar [*kad*], and chirp like a cricket [*tsertser*],"—in allusion to his madness.

[2] Jer. xlvi. 5 (vi. 25).

Then, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the young Babylonian conqueror swept down upon Syria and Palestine like a bounding leopard, like an avenging eagle (Hab. i. 7, 8). Jehoiakim had no choice but to change his vassalhood to Necho for a vassalage to Nebuchadrezzar.[1] He might have suffered severe consequences, but tidings came to the young Chaldæan that his father had ended his reign of twenty-one years and was dead. For fear lest disturbances might arise in his capital, he at once dashed home across the desert with some light troops by way of Tadmor, while he told his general to follow him home through Syria by the longer route. He seems, however, to have carried away with him some captives, among whom were Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael,[2] destined hereafter for such memorable fortunes. Jehoiakim himself was thrown into fetters to be carried into Babylon; but the conqueror changed his mind, and probably thought that it would be safer for the present to accept his pledges and assurances, and leave him as his viceroy. "He took an oath of him," says Ezekiel (xvii. 13); "he took also the mighty of the land."[3]

For three years this frivolous egotist who occupied the throne of Judah remained faithful to his covenant with the King of Babylon, but at the end of that time he rebelled. In this rebellion he was again deluded by the glamour of Egypt, and reliance on the empty promise of "horses and much people." Ezekiel openly

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, X. xi.; Berosus, p. 11. The Chronicler and Josephus show some confusion, caused by the similarity of the names Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin.

[2] Dan. i. 6.

[3] We might infer from Ezek. xvii. 12 that Nebuchadrezzar actually took Jehoiakim with him to Babylon.

disapproved of this policy,[1] and reproached the king for his faithlessness to his oath. Jeremiah went further, and declared in the plainest language that "Nebuchadrezzar would certainly come up and destroy this land, and cause to cease from thence both man and beast."[2]

Nearer and nearer the danger came. At first the King of Babylon was too busy to do more than send against the Jewish rebel marauding bands of Chaldæans, who acted in concert with the hereditary depredators of Judah—Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. But the prophet knew that the danger would not end there, believing that God would yet "remove Judah out of His sight" for the unforgiven sins of Manasseh and the innocent blood with which he had filled Jerusalem.[3] At last Nebuchadrezzar had time to turn closer attention to the affairs of Judah, and this became necessary because of the revolt of Tyre under its King Ithobalus. In the stress of the peril Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast and a day of humiliation in the Temple. Jeremiah was at this time "shut up"—either in hiding, or in some sort of custody. As he could not go and preach in person, he dictated his prophecy to Baruch, who wrote it on a scroll, and went in the prophet's place to read it in the Lord's House to the people there assembled from Jerusalem and all Judah in the chamber of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, in the inner court, by the new gate.[4] Gemariah was the brother of Ahikam, the protector of the prophet.

No one was more painfully alarmed by Jeremiah's prophecy than Micaiah, the son of Gemariah, and he

[1] Ezek. xvii. 15.

[2] Jer. xxxvi. 29, xxv. 9, xxvi. 6.

[3] 2 Kings xxiv. 2–4.

[4] Grätz thinks that Jeremiah's roll was substantially Jer. xxv

thought it his duty to go and tell his father and the other princes what he had heard. They were assembled in the scribe's chamber, and sent a courtier of Ethiopian race—Jehudi, the son of Cushi—bidding him to bring the scroll with him, and to come to them.[1]

Baruch was a person of distinction. He was the brother of Seraiah, who is called in our A.V. "a quiet prince," and in the margin "prince of Menucha" or "chief chamberlain," literally "master of the resting-place"; and he was the grandson of Maaseiah, "the governor" of the city.[2] The office imposed on him by Jeremiah was so perilous and painful that it nearly broke his heart. He exclaimed to Jeremiah, "Woe is me now! the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow. I am weary with my sighing, and I find no rest." The answer which the prophet was commissioned to give him was very remarkable. It confirmed the terrible doom on his native land, but added, "'And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. For, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh,' saith the Lord: 'but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.'"[3]

Baruch obeyed the summons of the princes, and at their request sat down with them and read the scroll in their ears. When they had heard the portentous prophecy, they turned shuddering to one another, and said, "We must tell the king of all these words." They asked Baruch how he had written them, and he said he had taken them down at the prophet's dictation. Then, knowing the storm which would burst over the

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, IX. ix. 1.

[2] Jer. li. 59. Ewald, Hitzig, and others take the title to mean 'quartermaster" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 8).

[3] Jer. xlv. 1–5.

bold offenders, they said, "Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be."

Not daring to imperil the awful document, they laid it up in the chamber of Elishama, the scribe, but went to the king and told him its contents. He sent Jehudi to fetch it, and to read it in their hearing. Jehoiakim and the illustrious company were seated in the winter-chamber; for it was October, and a fire was burning in the brazier, where Jehoiakim sat warming himself in the chilly weather.

As he listened, he was filled not only with fury, but with contempt. Such a message might well have caused him and his worst counsellors to rend their clothes; but instead of this they adopted a tone of defiance. By the time that Jehudi had read three or four columns, Jehoiakim snatched the scribe's knife which hung at his girdle, and began to cut up the scroll, with the intention of burning it. Seeing his purpose, Gemariah, Elnathan, and Seraiah entreated him not to destroy it. But he would not listen. He flung the fragments into the brazier, and they were consumed. He ordered his son Jerahmeel,[1] with Seraiah and Shelemiah, to seize both Baruch and Jeremiah, and bring them before him for punishment. Doubtless they would have suffered the fate of Urijah, but "the Lord hid them." There were enough persons of power on their side to render their hiding-place secure.

But the king's impious indifference, so far from making any difference in the things that were, only brought down upon his guilt a fearful doom. Truth

[1] Zeph. i. 8; 1 Kings xxii. 26; Jer. xxxvi. 26, A.V., "The son of Hammelech." Comp. xxxviii. 6. *Hammelech* may be a proper name, or a prince of the blood-royal may be intended.

cannot be cut to pieces, or burnt, or mechanically suppressed.

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;
The eternal years of God are hers:
But error, vanquished, writhes in pain,
And dies amid her worshippers."

All the former denunciations, and new ones added to them, were rewritten by Jeremiah and his faithful friend in their hiding-place, and among them these words[1]:—

"Thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, 'He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.'"

A frightful drought added to the misery of this reign, but failed to bring the wretched king to his senses. Jeremiah describes it[2]:—

"Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they bow down mourning unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And the nobles send their menials to the waters: they come to the pits, and find no water; they return with their vessels empty; they are ashamed and confounded, and cover their heads, because of the ground which is chapped, for that no rain hath been in the land. . . Yea, the hind also in the field calveth, and forsaketh her young, because there is no grass. And the wild asses stand on the

[1] "The 'Book,' now as afterwards, was to be the death-blow of the old regal, aristocratic, sacerdotal exclusiveness. The 'Scribe,' now first rising into importance in the person of Baruch to supply the defects of the living Prophet, was, as the printing-press in later ages handing on the words of truth, which else might have irretrievabl perished" (Stanley).

[2] Cheyne, *Jeremiah*, p. 149; Jer. xiv. 1–xv. 9.

bare heights, they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail, because there is no herbage."

Even this affliction, so vividly and pathetically described, failed to waken any repentance. And then the doom fell. Nebuchadrezzar advanced in person against Jerusalem.[1] Even the hardy nomad Rechabites had to fly before the Chaldæans, and to take refuge in the cities which they hated. The sacred historian tells us nothing as to the manner of the death of Jehoiakim, only saying that he "slept with his fathers": his narrative of this period is exceedingly meagre. Josephus says that Nebuchadrezzar slew him and the flower of the citizens, and sent three thousand captives to Babylon.[2] Some imagine that he was killed by the Babylonians in a raid outside the walls of Jerusalem, or "murdered by his own people, and his body thrown for a time outside the walls." If so, the Babylonians did not war with the dead. His remains, after this "burial of an ass,"[3] may have been finally suffered to rest in a tomb. The Septuagint says (2 Chron. xxxvi. 8) that he was buried "in Ganosan," by which may be meant the sepulchre of Manasseh in the garden of Uzza.[4] Not

[1] Nebuchadrezzar occupies a larger space in the Bible than any heathen king, being spoken of in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

[2] For further details of Jehoiakim see 1 Esdras i. 38: "He bound Joakim and the nobles; *but Zaraces* his brother he apprehended, and brought him out of Egypt." The allusion is entirely obscure, and probably arises from some corruption of the text. The literal rendering is: "And *Joakim* bound the nobles; but Zaraces his brother he apprehended, and brought him out of Egypt." Zaraces might be a corruption for Zedekiah, who was Jehoiakim's half-brother. Some think that Zaraces is a corruption for Urijah, and "his brother" a clerical error.

[3] Jer. xxxvi. 30, xxii. 19.

[4] LXX., *καὶ ἐκοιμήθη Ἰωακεὶμ ἐν Γανοζὰν μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἑαυτοῦ.*

for him was the wailing cry "*Hoî, adon! Hoî, hodo!*" ("Ah, Lord! Ah, his glory!").

"The memory of the wicked shall rot." Certainly this was the case with Jehoiakim. The Chronicler mysteriously alludes to "his abominations which he did, *and that which was found in him.*"[1] The Rabbis, interpreting this after their manner, say that "the thing found" was the name of the demon Codonazor, to whom he had sold himself, which after his death was discovered legibly written in Hebrew letters on his skin. "Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Eleazar debated what was meant by 'that which was found on him.' One said that he tattooed the name of an idol upon his body (אמתו), and the other said that he had tatooed the name of the god Recreon."[2]

[1] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8.

[2] *Sanhedrin*, f. 104, 2. For another allusion see *id.* 49, 1; Hershon *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 232.

CHAPTER XXXV

JEHOIACHIN

B.C. 597

2 KINGS xxiv. 8—16

"There are times when ancient truths become modern falsehoods, when the signs of God's dispensations are made so clear by the course of natural events as to supersede the revelations of even their most sacred past."—STANLEY, *Lectures*, ii. 521.

JEHOIACHIN—"Jehovah maketh steadfast"—who is also called Jeconiah, and—perhaps with intentional slight—Coniah, succeeded, at the age of eighteen, to the miserable and distracted heritage of the throne of Judah. The "eight years old" of the Chronicler must be a clerical error, for he had a harem. He only reigned for three months; and the historian pronounces over him, as over all the four kings of the House of Josiah, the stereotyped condemnation of evil-doing. Was there anything in the manner in which Josiah had trained his family which could account for their unsatisfactoriness? In Jehoiachin's case we do not know what his transgressions were, but perhaps his mother's influence rendered him as little favourable to the prophetic party as his brother Jehoiakim had been. For the *Gebirah* was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. Her name means apparently "Brass," and nothing can be deduced from it; but her father Elnathan was (as we

have seen) the envoy who, by order of Jehoiakim, had dragged back from Egypt the martyr-prophet Urijah.[1]

Brief as was his reign of three months and ten days[2] —a hundred days, like that of his unhappy uncle Jehoahaz—he is largely alluded to by the contemporary prophets.

Indignant at the sins and apostasies of Judah, and convinced that her retribution was nigh at hand, Jeremiah took with him an earthen pot to the Valley of Hinnom, and there shivered it to pieces at Tophet in the presence of certain elders of the people and of the priests, explaining that his symbolic action indicated the destruction of Jerusalem. On hearing the tenor of these prophecies, the priest Pashur, who was officer of the Temple, smote Jeremiah in the face, and put him in the stocks in a prominent place by the Temple gate.[3] Jeremiah in return prophesied that Pashur and all his family should be carried into captivity, so that his name should be changed from Pashur to Magor-Missabib, "Terror on every side."

Against the king himself he pronounced the doom: "'As I live,' saith the Lord, 'though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet will I pluck thee thence; and I will give thee into the hands of them that seek thy life, . . even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar. . . And I will hurl thee, and thy mother that bare thee, into another

[1] Jer. xxvi. 22.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9.

[3] Jer. xx. 2. There seem to have been special "stocks" and "collars" in the Temple, reserved, by order of the priest Jehoiada, for those whom the priests regarded as unruly prophets (Jer. xxix. 26).

country ;[1] and there shall ye die.' . . Is this man Coniah a despised broken piece of work? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they hurled, he and his seed, and cast into a land which they know not? O land, land, land! hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, 'Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, or ruling any more in Judah.'"

Yet there must have been something in Jeconiah which impressed favourably the minds of men. Brief as was his reign, his memory was never forgotten. We learn from the *Mishna* that one of the gates of Jerusalem —probably that by which he left the city—for ever bore his name.[2] Josephus says that his captivity was annually commemorated. Jeremiah writes in the Lamentations :—

"Our pursuers are swifter than the eagles of heaven : they have pursued us upon the mountains, they have laid wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, 'Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.'"

Ezekiel compares him to a young lion :—

"He went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey. And he knew their palaces, and laid waste their cities ; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. Then the nations set against him

[1] Jer. xxii. 24-30. The captivity of the queen-mother struck men's imaginations (Jer. xxix. 2).

[2] *Middoth*, ii. 6, quoted by Cheyne, p. 163; Jos., *B.J.*, VI. ii. 1, Comp. Ezek. i. 2.

on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. And they put him in ward in hooks, and brought him to the King of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel."[1]

A prince of whom a contemporary prophet could thus write was obviously no *fainéant.* Indeed, the energetic measures which Nebuchadrezzar adopted against him may have been due to the fact that he had endeavoured to rouse his discouraged people. But what could he do against such a power as that of the Chaldæans? Nebuchadrezzar sent his generals against Jerusalem; and when it was ripe for capture, advanced in person to take possession of it. Resistance had become hopeless; there lay no chance in anything but that complete submission which might possibly avert the worst effects of the destruction of the city. Accordingly, Jeconiah, accompanied by his mother, his court, his princes, and his officers, went out in procession, and threw themselves on the mercy of the King of Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar was far less brutal than the Sargons and Assurbanipals of Assyria; but Judah had twice revolted, and the defection of Tyre showed him that the affairs of Palestine could no longer be neglected. He thoroughly despoiled the Temple and the palace, and carried the spoils to Babylon, as Isaiah had forewarned Hezekiah should be the case.[2] That he might further weaken and

[1] Ezek. xix. 6–9. The special allusions are no longer certain.

[2] 2 Kings xx. 17. The expression "*he cut to pieces* all the vessels of gold which Solomon had made" is hardly consistent with Ezra i. 7–11, unless we understand the word in a loose sense.

humiliate the city, he stripped it of its king, its royal house, its court, its nobles, its soldiers, even its craftsmen and smiths, and carried ten thousand eight hundred and thirty-two captives to Babylon (Jos., *Antt.*, X. vii. 1), among whom was the prophet Ezekiel. He naturally spared Jeremiah, who regarded him as "the sword of Jehovah" (Jer. xlvii. 6), and as "Jehovah's servant, to do His pleasure" (Jer. xxv. 9, xxvii. 6, xliii. 10). On the whole, Nebuchadrezzar is not treated with abhorrence by the Jews. There was something in his character which inspired respect; and the Jews deal with him leniently, both in their records and generally in their traditions. "Nebuchadnezzar," we read in the Talmud (*Taanith*, f. 18, 2), "was a worthy king, and deserved that a miracle should be performed through him."

From the allusion of Ezekiel we might infer that Jehoiachin was violent and self-willed; but Josephus speaks of his kindness and gentleness.[1] Was he, as Jeremiah had prophesied, literally "childless"?[2] It is true that in 1 Chron. iii. 17, 18, eight sons are ascribed to him, and among them Shealtiel, in whom the royal line was continued. But it is far from certain that these sons were not the sons of his brother Neri, of the House of Nathan,[3] and it seems that they were only adopted by the unhappy captive. The Book of Baruch describes him weeping by the Euphrates.[4] But

[1] He says that he nobly gave himself up to save the city (*Antt.*, X. vii. 1). His captivity was made an era from which to date Ezek. i. 2, viii. 1, xxiv. 1, xxvi. 1, etc. Comp. Susannah 1-4.

[2] Jer. xxii. 30, *'arîrî*. His "son" Assir (1 Chron. iii. 17) may have been made an eunuch (Isa. xxxix. 7).

[3] Luke iii. 27, 31; Matt. i. 12.

[4] Baruch i. 3, 4.

if we may trust the story of Susannah, his outward fortunes were peaceful, and he was allowed to live in his own house and gardens in peace, and in a certain degree of splendour.[1]

[1] The favourable notice of Nebuchadrezzar in *Taanith* (quoted above) is not found in *Berachoth*, f. 57, 2, where he is called "the wicked." There are many wild legends about him. In *Nedarim* (f. 65, 2), R. Yitzchak says: "May melted gold be poured into the mouth of the wicked Nebuchadrezzar! Had not an angel struck him on the mouth, he would have outshone all David's songs and praises." With reference to Isa. xxii. 1, 2, the Rabbis say that Jeconiah went to the Temple roof, and flung up the keys into the air, when Nebuchadrezzar required them: "a hand took them, and they were seen no more" (*Shekalim*, vi. 5). In *Nedarim* (f. 65, 2) we are told that Zedekiah's rebellion consisted in divulging, contrary to his oath, that he had seen Nebuchadrezzar eating a live hare (Hershon, *Treasures of the Talmud*).

CHAPTER XXXVI

ZEDEKIAH, THE LAST KING OF JUDAH

B.C. 597—586

2 KINGS xxiv. 18—xxv. 7

"Quand ce grand Dieu a choisi quelqu'un pour être l'instrument de ses desseins rien n'arrête le cours, où il enchaine, où il aveugle, où il dompte tout ce qui est capable de résistance."

BOSSUET, *Oraison funèbre de Henriette Marie.*

WHEN Jehoiachin was carried captive to Babylon, never to return, his uncle Mattaniah ("Jehovah's gift"), the third son of Josiah, was put by Nebuchadrezzar in his place. In solemn ratification of the new king's authority, the Babylonian conqueror sanctioned the change of his name to Zedekiah ("Jehovah's righteousness").[1] He was twenty-one at his accession, and he reigned eleven years.

"Behold," writes Ezekiel, "the King of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and brought them to him to Babylon; and he took of the seed royal" (*i.e.*, Zedekiah), "*and made a covenant with him; he also brought him under an oath: and took away the mighty of the land, that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.*"[2]

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[1] Comp. Jer. xxiii. 6: Jehovah-Tsidkenu.

[2] Ezek. xvii. 12–14.

Perhaps by this covenant Zechariah meant to emphasise the meaning of his name, and to show that he would reign in righteousness.

The prophet at the beginning of the chapter describes Nebuchadrezzar and Jehoiachin in "a riddle."

"A great eagle," he says, "with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the top of the cedar" (Jehoiachin): "he cropped off the topmost of the young twigs thereof, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land" (Zedekiah), "and planted it in a fruitful soil; he placed it beside great waters, he set it as a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned towards him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs."[1]

The words refer to the first three years of Zedekiah's reign, and they imply, consistently with the views of the prophets, that, if the weak king had been content with the lowly eminence to which God had called him, and if he had kept his oath and covenant with Babylon, all might yet have been well with him and his land. At first it seemed likely to be so; for Zedekiah wished to be faithful to Jehovah. He made a covenant with all the people to set free their Hebrew slaves. Alas! it was very shortlived. Self-sacrifice cost something, and the princes soon took back the discarded bond-servants.[2] What made this conduct the more shocking was that their covenant to obey the law had been made in the most solemn manner by "cutting a calf in twain, and passing between the severed halves."[3] But the

[1] Ezek. xvii. 1–6. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 8–11.
[3] Jer. xxxiv. 19. Comp. Gen xv. 17.

weak king was perfectly powerless in the hands of his tyrannous aristocracy.[1]

The exiles in Babylon were now the best and most important section of the nation. Jeremiah compares them to good figs; while the remnant at Jerusalem were bad and withered. He and Ezekiel raised their voices, as in strophe and antistrophe, for the teaching alike of the exiles and of the remnant left at Jerusalem, for whom the exiles were bidden to entreat God in prayer. Zedekiah himself made at least one journey northward, either voluntarily or under summons, to renew his oath and reassure Nebuchadrezzar of his fidelity.[2] He was accompanied by Seraiah, the brother of Baruch, who was privately entrusted by Jeremiah with a prophecy of the fall of Babylon, which he was to fling into the midst of the Euphrates.[3]

The last King of Judah seems to have been weak rather than wicked. He was a reed shaken by the wind. He yielded to the influence of the last person who argued with him; and he seems to have dreaded above all things the personal ridicule, danger, and opposition which it was his duty to have defied. Yet we cannot withhold from him our deep sympathy; for he was born in terrible times—to witness the death-throes of his country's agony, and to share in them. It was no longer a question of independence, but only of the choice of servitudes. Judah was like a silly and trembling sheep between two huge beasts of prey.[4]

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[1] This is strikingly shown by his piteous remark to them in Jer. xxxviii. 5.

[2] He first sent two of Jeremiah's friends, Elasah and Gemariah, the son of Shaphan.

[3] Some critics have doubted the authenticity of Jer. li., lii.

[4] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14–21 Stanley, ii. 528; Milman, i. 394.

Only thus can we account for the strange apostasies —"the abominations of the heathen"—with which he permitted the Temple to be polluted; and for the ill-treatment which he allowed to be inflicted on Jeremiah and other prophets, to whom in his heart he felt inclined to listen.

What these abominations were we read with amazement in the eighth chapter of Ezekiel. The prophet is carried in vision to Jerusalem, and there he sees the Asherah—"the image which provoketh to jealousy"—which had so often been erected and destroyed and re-erected. Then through a secret door he sees creeping things, and abominable beasts, and the idol-blocks of the House of Israel pourtrayed upon the wall, while several elders of Israel stood before them and adored, with censers in their hands—among whom he must specially have grieved to see Jaazaneiah, the son of Shaphan,[1] flattering himself, as did his followers, that in that dark chamber Jehovah saw them not. Next at the northern gate he sees Zion's daughters weeping for Tammuz, or Adonis. Once more, in the inner court of the Temple, between the porch and the altar, he sees about twenty-five men with their backs to the altar, and their faces to the east; and they worshipped the sun towards the east; and, lo! they put the vine branch to their nose.[2] Were not these crimes sufficient to evoke the wrath of Jehovah, and to alienate His ear from prayers offered by such polluted worshippers? Egypt, Assyria, Syria, Chaldæa,

[1] Shaphan's other sons, Gemariah, Ahikam, Elasah, and his grandson Gedaliah, were friends of Jeremiah.

[2] Ezek. viii. 17. The allusion seems to be to a custom like that of the Parsees, who hold a branch of tamarisk or pomegranate twigs (called *barsom*) before their mouths when they adore the sacred fire. Strabo, xv. 732; Spiegel, *Zendavesta*, ii., p. lxviii; *Eran. Alterthumsk.*, iii. 571 (Orelli, *ad loc.*). Lightfoot explains it, "add fuel to their wrath."

all contributed their idolatrous elements to the detestable syncretism; and the king and the priests ignored, permitted, or connived at it.[1] This must surely be answered for. How could it have been otherwise? The king and the priests were the official guardians of the Temple, and these aberrations could not have gone on without their cognisance. There was another party of sheer formalists, headed by men like the priest Pashur, who thought to make talismans of rites and shibboleths, but had no sincerity of heart-religion.[2] To these, too, Jeremiah was utterly opposed. In his opinion Josiah's reformation had failed. Neither Ark, nor Temple, nor sacrifice were anything in the world to him in comparison with true religion. All the prophets with scarcely one exception are anti-ritualists; but none more decidedly so than the prophet-priest. His name is associated in tradition with the hiding of the Ark, and a belief in its ultimate restoration; yet to Jeremiah, apart from the moral and spiritual truths of which it was the material symbol, the Ark was no better than a wooden chest. His message from Jehovah is, "I will give you pastors according to My heart, . and they shall say no more, 'The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord': neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they miss it; neither shall it be made any more."[3]

Doom followed the guilt and folly of king, priests, and people. If political wisdom were insufficient to show Zedekiah that the necessities of the case were an indication of God's will, he had the warnings of the prophets constantly ringing in his ears, and the assur-

[1] Ezek. xvi. 15–34.
[2] Jer. vii. 4, 21–28, viii. 8, xxiii. 31–33, xxxi. 33, 34.
[3] Jer. iii. 15, 16.

ance that he must remain faithful to Nebuchadrezzar. But he was in fear of his own princes and courtiers. A combined embassy reached him from the kings of Edom, Ammon, Moab, Tyre and Sidon, urging him to join in a league against Babylon.[1] This embassy was supported by a powerful party in Jerusalem. Their solicitations were rendered more plausible by the recent accession (B.C. 590) of the young and vigorous Pharaoh Hophrah—the Apries of Herodotus[2]—to the throne of Egypt, and by the recrudescence of that incurable disease of Hebrew politics, a confidence in the idle promises of Egypt to supply the confederacy with men and horses.[3] In vain did Jeremiah and Ezekiel uplift their warning voices. The blind confidence of the king and of the nobles was sustained by the flattering visions and promises of false prophets, prominent among whom was a certain Hananiah, the son of Azur, of Gibeon, "the prophet."[4] To indicate the futility of the contemplated rebellion, Jeremiah had made "thongs and poles" with yokes, and had sent them to the kings, whose embassy had reached Jerusalem, with a message of the most emphatic distinctness, that Nebuchadrezzar was God's appointed servant, and that they must serve him till God's own appointed time. If they obeyed this intimation, they would be left undisturbed in their own lands; if they disobeyed it, they would be scourged into absolute submission by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence. Jeremiah delivered the same oracle to his own king.[5]

[1] Jer. xxvii. 3. [2] Herod., ii. 161.

[3] Psammis, the son of Necho, only reigned six years; Hophrah (B.C. 594) was his son.

[4] The LXX. calls him "the false prophet."

[5] Jer. xxvii. 1–8, 12–18. On vv. 16–22 see the LXX.

The warning was rendered unavailing by the conduct of Hananiah. He prophesied that within two full years God would break the yoke of the King of Babylon; and that the captive Jeconiah, and the nobles, and the vessels of the House of the Lord would be brought back. Jeremiah, by way of an acted parable, had worn round his neck one of his own yokes. Hananiah, in the Temple, snatched it off, broke it to pieces, and said, "So will I break the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years."[1]

We can imagine the delight, the applause, the enthusiasm with which the assembled people listened to these bold predictions. Hananiah argued with them, so to speak, in shorthand, for he appealed to their desires and to their prejudices. It is always the tendency of nations to say to their prophets, "Say not unto us hard things: speak smooth things; prophesy deceits."

Against Hananiah personally there seems to have been no charge, except that in listening to the lying spirit of his own desires he could not hear the true message of God. But he did not stand alone.[2] Among the children of the captivity, his promises were echoed by two downright false prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, who prophesied lies in God's name. They were men of evil life, and a fearful fate overtook them. Their words against Babylon came to the ears of Nebuchadrezzar, and they were "roasted in the fire," so that the horror of their end passed into

[1] Here (Jer. xxviii. 11, and in xxxiv. 1, xxxix. 5) the name is written "Nebuchadnezzar"; everywhere else in Jeremiah it is "Nebuchadrezzar."

[2] Part of his dispute with Jeremiah turned on the recovery or non-recovery of the Temple vessels. Zedekiah is said to have given a set of silver vessels to replace the old ones (Baruch i. 8).

a proverb and a curse.[1] Truly God fed these false prophets with wormwood, and gave them poisonous water to drink.[2]

After the action of Hananiah, Jeremiah went home stricken and ashamed: apparently he never again uttered a public discourse in the Temple. It took him by surprise; and he was for the moment, perhaps, daunted by the plausive echo of the multitude to the lying prophet. But when he got home the answer of Jehovah came: "Go and tell Hananiah, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou hast made for them yokes of iron. I have put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadrezzar. Hear now, Hananiah, The Lord hath not sent thee: thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Behold, this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken revolt against the Lord. What hath the chaff to do with the wheat? saith the Lord."[3]

Two months after Hananiah lay dead, and men's minds were filled with fear. They saw that God's word was indeed as a fire to burn, and as a hammer to dash in pieces.[4] But meanwhile Zedekiah had been over-persuaded to take the course which the true prophets had forbidden. Misled by the false prophets and mincing prophetesses whom Ezekiel denounced,[5] who daubed men's walls with whitened plaster, he had sent an embassy to Pharaoh Hophrah, asking for an army of infantry and cavalry to support his rebellion from Assyria.[6] In the eyes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the crime did not only consist in defying the exhortations of those whom Zedekiah knew to be Jehovah's

[1] Jer. xxix. 21–23.
[2] Jer. xxiii. 9–32.
[3] Jer. xxviii. 13–16, xxiii. 28.
[4] Jer. xxiii. 29.
[5] Ezek. xiii. 1–23.
[6] Ezek. xvii. 25.

accredited messengers. In mitigation of this offence he might have pleaded the extreme difficulty of discriminating the truth amid the ceaseless babble of false pretenders.[1] But, on the other hand, he had broken the solemn oath which he had taken to Nebuchadrezzar in the name of God, and the sacred covenant which he seems to have twice ratified with him.[2] This it was which raised the indignation of the faithful, and led Ezekiel to prophesy:—

"Shall he prosper?
Shall he escape that doeth such things?
Or shall he break the covenant and be believed?
'As I live,' saith the Lord God, 'surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king,
Whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke,
Even with him in the midst of Babylon, shall he die.'"[3]

Sad close for a dynasty which had now lasted for nearly five centuries!

As for Pharaoh, he too was an eagle, as Nebuchadrezzar was—a great eagle with great wings and many feathers, but not so great. The trailing vine of Judah bent her roots towards him, but it should wither in the furrows when the east wind touched it.[4]

The result of Zedekiah's alliance with Egypt was the intermission of his yearly tribute to Assyria; and at last, in the ninth year of Zedekiah, Nebuchadrezzar was aroused to put down this Palestinian revolt, supported as it was by the vague magnificence of Egypt.

[1] Josephus rightly attributes the unfortunate career of Zedekiah to the weakness with which he listened to evil counsellors, and to the insolent multitude.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13; Jer. lii. 3.

[3] Ezek. xvii. 15, 16, 18, 19.

[4] Ezek. xvii. 7–10.

Jeremiah had said, "Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, is but a noise [or desolation]: he hath passed the time appointed."[1]

This was about the year 589. In 598 Nebuchadrezzar had carried Jehoachin into captivity, and ever since then some of his forces had been engaged in the vain effort to capture Tyre, which still, after a ten years' siege, drew its supplies from the sea, and remained impregnable on her island rock. He did not choose to raise this long-continued siege by diverting the troops to beleaguer so strong a fortress as Jerusalem, and therefore he came in person from Babylon.

In Ezek. xxi. 20–24 we have a singular and vivid glimpse of his march. On his way he came to a spot where two roads branched off before him. One led to Rabbath, the capital of Ammon, on the east of Jordan; the other to Jerusalem, on the west. Which road should he take? Personally, it was a matter of indifference; so he threw the burden of responsibility upon his gods by leaving the decision to the result of belomancy.[2] Taking in his hand a sheaf of brightened arrows, he held them upright, and decided to take the route indicated by the fall of the greater number of arrows. He confirmed his uncertainty by consulting teraphim, and by hepatoscopy—*i.e.*, by examining the liver of slain victims. Rabbath and the Ammonites were not to be spared, but it was upon the covenant-breaking king and city that the first vengeance was

[1] Jer. xlvi. 17.

[2] Another form of belomancy is still commonly practised among the Arabs. Three arrows are placed in a vessel: on one of them is written, "My God permits me"; on another, "My God forbids me"; the third is blank. They are then shaken, and the decision is guided by the one which falls out first. Comp. Homer, *Iliad*, iii. 316; *Speaker's Commentary, ad loc.*

to fall.[1] And this is what the prophet has to say to Zedekiah:—

"And thou, O deadly-wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come in the time of the iniquity of the end; thus saith the Lord God, 'Remove the mitre, and take off the crown. This shall be not thus. Exalt the low, and abase that which is high. An overthrow, overthrow, overthrow, will I make it: this also shall be no more, until He come whose right it is: and I will give it Him."[2]

So (B.C. 587) Jerusalem was delivered over to siege, even as Ezekiel had sketched upon a tile.[3] It was to be assailed in the old Assyrian manner—as we see it represented in the British Museum bas-relief, where Sennacherib is portrayed in the act of besieging Lachish—with forts, mounds, and battering-rams; and Ezekiel had also been bidden to put up an iron plate between him and his pictured city, to represent the mantelet from behind which the archers shot.

In this dread crisis Zedekiah sent Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and Jehucal, to Jeremiah, entreating his prayers for the city,[4] for he had not yet been put in prison. Doubtless he prayed, and at first it looked as if deliverance would come. Pharaoh Hophrah put in motion the Egyptian army with its Carian mercenaries and Soudanese negroes, and Nebuchadrezzar was sufficiently alarmed to raise the siege and go to meet the Egyptians. The hopes of the people probably rose high, though multitudes seized

[1] Ezek. xxi. 28–32.

[2] An allusion to the restoration of Jeconiah or his descendants, and to the far-off Messiah, meek and lowly.

[3] Ezek. iv. 1–3.

[4] Jer. xxxvii. 3.

the opportunity to fly to the mountains.[1] The circumstances closely resembled those under which Sennacherib had raised the siege of Jerusalem to go to meet Tirhakah the Ethiopian; and perhaps there were some, and the king among them, who looked that such a wonder might be vouchsafed to him through the prayers of Jeremiah as had been vouchsafed to Hezekiah through the prayers of Isaiah. Not for a moment did Jeremiah encourage these vain hopes. To Zephaniah, as to an earlier deputation from the king, when he sent Pashur with him to inquire of the prophet, Jeremiah returned a remorseless answer. It is too late. Pharaoh shall be defeated; even if the Chaldæan army were smitten, its wounded soldiers would suffice to besiege and burn Jerusalem, and take into captivity the miserable inhabitants after they had suffered the worst horrors of a besieged city.[2]

[1] Ezek. vii. 16.

[2] Jer. xxi. 1–10, xxxvii. 1–17. Josephus says that Pharaoh was defeated (*Antt.*, X vii. 3). Jeremiah merely says that he and his army returned to their own land.

CHAPTER XXXVII

JEREMIAH AND HIS PROPHECIES

JER. i. 1—v. 31

"Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes—they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonised for hurled the contumelious stone;
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design."
LOWELL.

TRULY Jeremiah was a prophet of evil. The king might have addressed him in the words with which Agamemnon reproaches Kalchas.[1]

"Augur accursed! denouncing mischief still:
Prophet of plagues, for ever boding ill!
Still must that tongue some wounding message bring,
And still thy priestly pride provoke thy king."

Never was there a sadder man.[2] Like Phocion, he believed in the enemies of his country more than he believed in his own people. He saw "Too late" written upon everything. He saw himself all but universally execrated as a coward, as a traitor, as one who weakened the nerves and damped the courage of those

[1] Homer, *Iliad*, i. 106–109.

[2] But it must not be forgotten that Jer. xxxi. 1–34 is so hopeful that it has been called "the Gospel before Christ."

who were fighting against fearful odds for their wives and children, the ashes of their fathers, their altars, and their hearths. It had become his fixed conviction that any prophets—and there were a multitude of them—who prophesied peace were false prophets, and *ipso facto* proved themselves conspirators against the true well-being of the land.[1] In point of fact, Jeremiah lived to witness the death-struggle of the idea of religion in its predominantly national character (vii. 8–16, vi. 8). "The continuity of the national faith refused to be bound up with the continuance of the nation. When the nation is dissolved into individual elements, the continuity and ultimate victory of the true faith depends on the relations of Jehovah to individual souls out of which the nation shall be bound up."[2]

And now a sad misfortune happened to Jeremiah. His home was not at Jerusalem, but at Anathoth, though he had long been driven from his native village by the murderous plots of his own kindred, and of those who had been infuriated by his incessant prophecies of doom. When the Chaldæans retired from Jerusalem to encounter Pharaoh, he left the distressed city for the land of Benjamin, "to receive his portion from thence in the midst of the people"—apparently, for the sense is doubtful, to claim his dues of maintenance as a priest. But at the city gate he was arrested by Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the captain of the watch, who charged him with the intention of deserting to the Chaldæans. Jeremiah pronounced the charge to be a lie; but Irijah took him before the princes, who hated him, and consigned him to dreary and dangerous imprisonment in

[1] Jer. vi. 14, viii. 11; Ezek. xiii. 10.

[2] W. R. Smith, "Prophets" (*Enc. Brit.*).

the house of Jonathan the scribe. In the vaults of this "house of the pit" he continued many days.[1] The king sympathised with him: he would gladly have delivered him, if he could, from the rage of the princes; but he did not dare.[2]

Meanwhile, the siege went on, and the people never forgot the anguish of despair with which they waited the reinvestiture of the city. Ever since that day it has been kept as a fast—the fast of Tebeth. Zedekiah, yearning for some advice, or comfort—if comfort were to be had—from the only man whom he really trusted, sent for Jeremiah to the palace, and asked him in despicable secrecy, "Is there any word from the Lord?" The answer was the old one: "Yes! Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the King of Babylon." Jeremiah gave it without quailing, but seized the opportunity to ask on what plea he was imprisoned. Was he not a prophet? Had he not prophesied the return of the Chaldæan host? Where now were all the prophets who had prophesied peace? Would not the king at least save him from the detestable prison in which he was dying by inches?

The king heard his petition, and he was removed to a better prison in the court of the watch, where he received his daily piece of bread out of the bakers' street until all the bread in the city was spent.

For now utter famine came upon the wretched Jews, to add to the horrors and accidents of the siege. If

[1] Jer. xxxvii. 11-15.

[2] Jer. xxxviii. 5. The Jewish aristocracy consisted, says Grätz, of three classes: the *benî hammelech*, or "king's sons"—*i.e.*, princes of the blood-royal; the *roshî aboth*, "heads of the fathers," or *sekenîm*, "elders"; and the *abhodî hammelech*, "king's servants," or "courtiers" (ii. 446).

we would know what that famine was in its appalling intensity, we must turn to the Book of Lamentations. Those elegies, so unutterably plaintive, may not be by the prophet himself, but only by his school; but they show us what was the frightful condition of the people of Jerusalem before and during the last six months of the siege. "The sword of the wilderness"—the roving and plundering Bedouin—made it impossible to get out of the city in any direction. Things were as dreadfully hopeless as they had been in Samaria when it was besieged by Benhadad.[1] Hunger and thirst reduce human nature to its most animal conditions. They obliterate the merest elements of morality. They make men like beasts, and reveal the ferocity which is never quite dead in any but the purest and loftiest souls. They arouse the least human instincts of the aboriginal animal. The day came when there was no more bread left in Jerusalem.[2] The fair and ruddy Nazarites, who had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than corals, lovely as sapphires, became like withered boughs,[3] and even their friends did not recognise them in those ghastly and emaciated figures which crept about the streets. The daughters of Zion, more cruel in their hunger than the very jackals, lost the instincts of pity and motherhood. Mothers and fathers devoured their own little unweaned children.[4] There was parricide as well as infanticide in the horrible houses. They seemed to plead that none could blame them, since the lives of many had become an intolerable anguish, and no man had bread for his little ones, and

[1] Lam. v. 4.
[2] Jer. xxxvii. 21, xxxviii. 9, lii. 6.
[3] Lam. iv. 7, 8.
[4] Lam. iv. 10, ii. 20; Ezek. v. 10; Baruch ii. 3.

their tongues cleaved to the roof of their mouth. All that happened six centuries later, during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, happened now. Then Martha, the daughter of Nicodemus ben-Gorion, once a lady of enormous wealth, was seen picking the grains of corn from the offal of the streets; now the women who had fed delicately and been brought up in scarlet were seen sitting desolate on heaps of dung.[1] And Jehovah did not raise His hand to save His guilty and dying people. It was too late!

And as is always the case in such extremities, there were men who stood defiant and selfish amid the universal misery. Murder, oppression, and luxury continued to prevail. The godless nobles did not intermit the building of their luxurious houses, asserting to themselves and others that, after all, the final catastrophe was not near at hand. The sudden death of one of them—Pelatiah, the son of Benaiah—while Ezekiel was prophesying, terrified the prophet so much that he flung himself on his face and cried with a loud voice, "Ah, Lord God! wilt Thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" But on the others this death by the visitation of God seems to have produced no effect; and the glory of God left the city, borne away upon its cherubim-chariot.[2]

Even under the stress of these dreadful circumstances the Jews held out with that desperate tenacity which has often been shown by nations fighting behind strong walls for their very existence, but by no nation more decidedly than by the Jews. And if the rebel-party, and the lying prophets who had brought the city to this pass, still entertained any hopes either of

[1] Lam. iv. 5. See Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 470. [2] Ezek. xi. 22.

a diversion caused by Pharaoh Hophrah, or of some miraculous deliverance such as that which had saved the city from Sennacherib years earlier, it is not unnatural that they should have regarded Jeremiah with positive fury. For he still continued to prophesy the captivity. What specially angered them was his message to the people that all who remained in Jerusalem should die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, but that those who deserted to the Chaldæans should live. It was on the ground of his having said this that they had imprisoned him as a deserter; and when Pashur and his son Gedaliah heard that he was still saying this, they and the other princes entreated Zedekiah to put him to death as a pernicious traitor, who weakened the hands of the patriot soldiers. Jeremiah was not guilty of the lack of patriotism with which they charged him. The day of independence had passed for ever, and Babylon, not Egypt, was the appointed suzerain. The counselling of submission—as many a victorious chieftain has been forced at last to counsel it, from the days of Hannibal to those of Thiers—is often the true and the only possible patriotism in doomed and decadent nations. Zedekiah timidly abandoned the prophet to the rage of his enemies; but being afraid to murder him openly as Urijah had been murdered, they flung him into a well in the dungeon of Malchiah, the king's son. Into the mire of this pit he sank up to the arms, and there they purposely left him to starve and rot.[1] But if no Israelite pitied him, his condition moved the compassion of Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian, one of the king's eunuch-chamberlains. He hurried to the king in a storm of

[1] This may possibly be alluded to in Psalm lxix. 2.

pity and indignation. He found him sitting, as a king should do, at the post of danger in the gate of Benjamin; for Zedekiah was not a physical, though he was a moral, coward. Ebed-Melech told the king that Jeremiah was dying of starvation, and Zedekiah bade him take three [1] men with him and rescue the dying man. The faithful Ethiopian hurried to a cellar under the treasury, took with him some old, worn fragments of robes, and, letting them down by cords, called to Jeremiah to put them under his arm-pits. He did so, and they drew him up into the light of day, though he still remained in prison.

It seems to have been at this time that, in spite of his grim vaticination of immediate retribution, Jeremiah showed his serene confidence in the ultimate future by accepting the proposal of his cousin Hanameel to buy some of the paternal fields at Anathoth, though at that very moment they were in the hands of the Chaldæans. Such an act publicly performed must have caused some consolation to the besieged, just as did the courage of the Roman senator who gave a good price for the estate outside the walls of Rome on which Hannibal was actually encamped.

Then Zedekiah once more secretly sent for him, and implored him to tell the unvarnished truth. "If I do," said the prophet, "will you not kill me? and will you in any case hearken to me?" Zedekiah swore not to betray him to his enemies; and Jeremiah told him that, even at that eleventh hour, if he would go out and make submission to the Babylonians, the city should not be burnt, and he should save the lives of himself and of his family. Zedekiah believed him, but pleaded that

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 10, A.V., "thirty."

he was afraid of the mockery of the deserters to whom he might be delivered. Jeremiah assured him that he should not be so delivered, and that, if he refused to obey, nothing remained for the city, and for him and his wives and children, but final ruin. The king was too weak to follow what he must now have felt to be the last chance which God had opened out for him. He could only "attain to half-believe." He entrusted the result to chance, with miserable vacillation of purpose; and the door of hope was closed upon him. His one desire was to conceal the interview; and if it came to the ears of the princes—of whom he was shamefully afraid—he begged Jeremiah to say that he had only entreated the king not to send him back to die in Jonathan's prison.

As he had suspected, it became known that Jeremiah had been summoned to an interview with the king. They questioned the prophet in prison. He told them the story which the king had suggested to him, and the truth remained undiscovered. For this deflection from exact truth it is tolerably certain that, in the state of men's consciences upon the subject of veracity in those days, the prophet's moral sense did not for a moment reproach him. He remained in his prison, guarded probably by the faithful Ebed-Melech, until Jerusalem was taken.

Let us pity the dreadful plight of Zedekiah, aggravated as it was by his weak temperament. "He stands at the head of a people determined to defend itself, but is himself without either hope or courage."[1]

[1] Van Oort, iv. 52.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

B.C. 586

2 KINGS XXV. 1—21

"In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all nations."—ZECH. xii. 3.

"An end is come, the end is come; it awaketh against thee: behold the end is come."—EZEK. vii. 6.

"Behold yon sterile spot
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert blast;
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory."

SHELLEY.

AFTER the siege had lasted for a year and a half, all but one day, at midnight the besiegers made a breach in the northern city wall.[1] It was a day of terrible remembrance, and throughout the exile it was observed as a solemn fast.[2]

Nebuchadrezzar was no longer in person before the

[1] Jos., *Antt.*, X. viii. 2; 2 Chron. xxxii. 5, xxxiii. 14. First and last, the siege seems to have lasted one year, five months, and twenty-seven days.

[2] Zech. viii. 19.

walls. He had other war-like operations and other sieges on hand—the sieges of Tyre, Asekah, and Lachish—as well as Jerusalem. He had therefore established his headquarters at Lachish, and did not superintend the final operations against the city.[1] But now that all had become practically hopeless, and the capture of the rest of Jerusalem was only a matter of a few days more, Zedekiah and his few best surviving princes and soldiers fled by night through the opposite quarter of the city. There was a little unwatched postern between two walls near the king's garden, and through this he and his escort fled, hoping to reach the Arabah, and make good his escape, perhaps to the Wady-el-Arish, which he could reach in five hours, through the wilds beyond the Jordan.[2] The heads of the king and his followers were muffled, and they carried on their shoulders their choicest possessions.[3] But he was betrayed by some of the mean deserters,[4] and pursued by the Chaldæans. His movements were doubtless impeded by the presence of his harem and his children. His little band of warriors could offer no resistance, and fled in all directions. Zedekiah, his family, and his attendants were taken prisoners, and carried to Riblah

[1] The inscriptions of Nebuchadrezzar which have been as yet deciphered speak of his sumptuous buildings and of his worship of the gods rather than of his conquests. See *Records of the Past*, vii. 69–78.

[2] Robinson, *Bibl. Res.*, ii. 536. Some suppose that "the king's garden" was near the mouth of the Tyropœon Valley.

[3] Ezek. xii. 12. Perhaps the gate alluded to is the fountain gate of Neh. iii. 15. Ezekiel seems to speak of "digging through the wall." Robinson says that a trace of the outermost wall still exists in the rude pathway which crosses the mouth of the Tyropœon on a mound hard by the old mulberry tree which marks the traditional site of Isaiah's martyrdom.

[4] Jos., *Antt.*, X. viii. 2.

to appear before the mighty conqueror.[1] Nebuchadrezzar showed no pity towards one whom he had elevated to the throne, and who had violated his most solemn assurances by intriguing with his enemies. He brought him to trial, and doomed him to witness with his own eyes the massacre of his two sons and of his attendants. After he had endured this anguish, worse than death, his eyes were put out, and, bound in double fetters,[2] he was sent to Babylon, where he ended his miserable days. To blind a king deprived him of all hope of recovering the throne, and was therefore in ancient days a common punishment.[3] The LXX. adds that he was sent by the Babylonians to grind a mill—εἰς οἰκίου μυλῶνος. This is probably a reminiscence of the blinded Samson. But thus were fulfilled with startling literalness two prophecies which might well have seemed to be contradictory.[4] For Jeremiah had said (xxxiv. 3),—

"Thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the King of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon."

Whereas Ezekiel had said (xii. 13),—

[1] Traces of his presence are found in inscriptions in the Wady of the Dog near Beyrout, and in Wady Brissa. See Sayce, *Proceedings of the Bibl. Arch. Soc.*, November 1881.

[2] 2 Kings xxv. 7. See Layard, *Nineveh*, ii. 376.

[3] The blinding was sometimes done by passing a red-hot rod of silver or brass over the open eyes; sometimes by plucking out the eyes (Jer. lii. 11, Vulg. *oculos eruit*; 2 Kings xxv. 7, *effodit*). See a hideous illustration of a yet more brutal process in Botta (*Monum. de Ninève*, Pl. cxviii.), where Sargon with his own hand is thrusting a lance into the eyes of a captive prince, whose head is kept steady by a bridle fastened to a hook through his lips. See also Judg. xvi. 21; Xen., *Anab.*, i. 9, § 13; Procopius, *Bel. Pers.*, i. 1; Ammianus, xxvii. 12; Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, i. 307.

[4] Jos., *Antt.*, X. viii. 2, 3.

"I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldæans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there."

Henceforth Zedekiah was forgotten, and his place knew him no more. We can only hope that in his blindness and solitude he was happier than he had been on the throne of Judah, and that before death came to end his miseries he found peace with God.

The conqueror did not come to spoil the city. He left that task to three great officers,—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, or chief executioner;[1] Nebushasban, the Rabsaris, or chief of the eunuchs; and Nergalshareser, the Rabmag, or chief of the magicians. They took their station by the Middle Gate, and first gave up the city to pillage and massacre. No horror was spared.[2] The sepulchres were rifled for treasure; the young Levites were slain in the house of their Sanctuary; women were violated; maidens and hoary-headed men were slain. "Princes were hanged up by the hand, and the faces of elders were dishonoured; priest and prophet were slain in the Sanctuary of the Lord,"[3] till the blood flowed like red wine from the winepress over the desecrated floor.[4] The guilty city

[1] Nebur-zir-iddina, "Nebo bestowed seed." Jer. xxxix. 9, 13, is in some way corrupt. Ezekiel (ix. 2), however, and Josephus (*Ant.*, X. viii. 2) mention *six* officers. Nebuzaradan was "chief of the executioners" (Gen. xxxvii. 36; 1 Kings ii. 25, 35, 46).

[2] Psalm lxxix. 2, 3.

[3] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17; Lam. ii. 21, v. 11, 12.

[4] To the reminiscences of these scenes are partly due the Talmudic legend about the blood of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, bubbling up to demand vengeance. Nebudchadrezzar slew a holocaust of human victims to appease the shade of the wrathful prophet, until the king himself was terrified, and asked if he wished his whole people to be slaughtered. Then the blood ceased to bubble.

drank at the hand of God the dregs of the cup of His fury.[1] It was the final vengeance. "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. He will no more carry thee away into captivity."[2] And, meanwhile, the little Bedouin principalities were full of savage exultation at the fate of their hereditary foe.[3] This was felt by the Jews as a culmination of their misery, that they became a derision to their enemies. The callous insults hurled at them by the neighbouring tribes in their hour of shame awoke that implacable wrath against Gebal and Ammon and Amalek which finds its echo in the Prophets and in the Psalms.[4]

After this the devoted capital was given up to destruction. The Temple was plundered. All that remained of its often-rifled splendours was carried away, such as the ancient pillars Jachin and Boaz, the masterpieces of Hiram's art, the caldron, the brazen sea, and all the vessels of gold, of silver, and of brass. Then the walls of the city were dismantled and broken down. The Temple, and the palace, and all the houses of the princes were committed to the flames. As for the principal remaining inhabitants, Seraiah the chief priest, perhaps the grandson of Hilkiah and the grandfather of Ezra, Zephaniah the second priest, the three Levitic doorkeepers, the secretary of war, five of the greatest nobles who "saw the king's face,"[5] and sixty of the common people who had been marked out for special punishment, were taken to Riblah, and there

[1] See Rawlinson, *Kings of Israel and Judah*, p. 236.
[2] Lam. iv. 22.
[3] Psalm lxxix. 1.
[4] Obad. 14-16; Psalm cxxxvii. 7; 1 Esdras iv. 45.
[5] Comp. Esther i. 14.

massacred by order of Nebuchadrezzar.[1] With these Nebuchadrezzar took away as his prisoners a multitude of the wealthier inhabitants, leaving behind him but the humblest artisans. As the craftsmen and smiths had been deported,[2] these poor people busied themselves in agriculture, as vine-dressers and husbandmen. The existing estates were divided among them; and being few in number, they found the amplest sustenance in treasures of wheat and barley, and oil and honey, and summer fruits, which they kept concealed for safety, as the fellaheen of Palestine do to this day.[3]

According to the historic chapters added to the prophecies of Jeremiah, the whole number of captives carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar in the seventh, the eighteenth, and the twenty-third years of his reign were 4,600.[4] The completeness of the desolation might well have caused the heart-rending outcry of Psalm lxxix.: "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; Thy holy Temple have they defiled; they have made Jerusalem a heap of stones. The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, and the flesh of Thy saints unto the beasts of the land. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was no man to bury them."

Among the remnant of the people was Jeremiah. Nebuzaradan had received from his king the strictest

[1] On these personages see 1 Chron. vi. 13, 14; 2 Kings xxii. 4; Ezra vii. 1; Jer. xxi. 1, xxxvii. 3, etc.

[2] Nebuchadrezzar had no doubt needed them for his great buildings at Babylon, and their deportation would render more difficult any attempt to refortify Jerusalem.

[3] Jer. xli. 8, xl. 12.

[4] Jer. lii. 28–30. In his seventh year, 3,023; in his eighteenth, 832 in his thirty-third, 745 = 4,600.

injunctions to treat him honourably; for he had heard from the deserters that he had always opposed the rebellion, and had prophesied the issue of the siege. He was indeed sent in manacles to Ramah;[1] but there Nebuchadrezzar gave him free choice to do exactly as he liked—either to accompany him to Babylon, where he should be well treated and cared for, or to return to Jerusalem, and live where he liked. This was his desire. Nebuchadrezzar therefore dismissed him with food and a present;[2] and he returned. The LXX. and Vulgate represent him as sitting weeping over the ruins of Jerusalem, and tradition says that he sought for his lamentations a cave still existing near the Damascus Gate. Of this Scripture knows nothing. But the melancholy prophet was only reserved for further tragedies. He had lived one of the most afflicted of human lives. A man of tender heart and shrinking disposition, he had been called to set his face like a flint against kings, and nobles, and mobs. Worse than this, being himself a prophet and priest, naturally led to sympathise with both, he was the doomed antagonist of both—victim of "one of the strongest of human passions, the hatred of priests against a priest who attacks his own order, the hatred of prophets against a prophet who ventures to have a voice and a will of his own." Even his own family had plotted against his life at humble Anathoth;[3] and when he retreated to Jerusalem, he found himself at the centre of the storm.

[1] Ramah was but five miles from Jerusalem, and at first Jeremiah may not have been identified (Jer. xl. 1-6).

[2] The present, if accepted, could only be regarded, under the circumstances, as part of the necessity of life. It does not fall under the head of the presents often offered to prophets (1 Sam. ix. 7; 2 Kings iv. 42; Mic. iii. 5, 11; Amos vii. 12).

[3] Jer. xi. 19-21, xii. 6.

Now perhaps he hoped for a gleam of sunset peace. But his hopes were disappointed. He had to tread the path of anguish and hatred to the bitter end, as he had trodden it for nearly fifty years of the troubled life which had followed his call in early boyhood.

"But, in the case of Jerusalem," says Dean Stanley, "both its first and second destruction have the peculiar interest of involving the dissolution of a religious dispensation, combined with the agony of an expiring nation, such as no other people has survived, and, by surviving, carried on the living recollection, first of one, and then of the other, for centuries after the first shock was over."[1]

[1] Stanley, *Lectures*, ii. 515.

CHAPTER XXXIX

GEDALIAH

B.C. 586

2 KINGS XXV. 22—30

"Vedi che son un che piango."—DANTE, *Inferno*.

"No, rather steel thy melting heart
To act the martyr's sternest part,
To watch with firm, unshrinking eye
Thy darling visions as they die,
Till all bright hopes and hues of day
Have faded into twilight grey."

KEBLE.

IN deciding that he would not accompany Nebuchadrezzar to Babylon, Jeremiah made the choice of duty. In Chaldæa he would have lived at ease, in plenty, in security, amid universal respect. He might have helped his younger contemporary Ezekiel in his struggle to keep the exiles in Babylon faithful to their duty and their God. He regarded the exiles as representing all that was best and noblest in the nation; and he would have been safe and honoured in the midst of them, under the immediate protection of the great Babylonian king. On the other hand, to return to Judæa was to return to a defenceless and a distracted people, the mere dregs of the true nation, the mere phantom of what they once had been. Surely his life had earned the blessing of repose? But no! The hopes of the

Chosen People, the seed of Abraham, God's servant, could not be dissevered from the Holy Land. Rest was not for him on this side of the grave. His only prayer must be, like that which Senancour had inscribed over his grave, "Éternité, deviens mon asile!" The decision cost him a terrible struggle; but duty called him, and he obeyed. It has been supposed by some critics[1] that the wild cry of Jer. xv. 10–21 expresses his anguish at the necessity of casting in his lot with the remnant; the sense that they needed his protecting influence and prophetic guidance; and the promise of God that his sacrifice should not be ineffectual for good to the miserable fragment of his nation, even though they should continue to struggle against him.

So with breaking heart he saw Nebuzaradan at Ramah marshalling the throng of captives for their long journey to the waters of Babylon. Before them, and before the little band which returned with him to the burnt Temple, the dismantled city, the desolate house, there lay an unknown future; but in spite of the exiles' doom it looked brighter for them than for him, as with tears and sobs they parted from each other. Then it was that—

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refuseth to be comforted, because they are not. Thus saith the Lord, 'Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded,' saith the Lord; 'and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy time to come,' saith the Lord, 'that thy children shall come again to their own border.'"[2]

[1] So Grätz and Cheyne. [2] Jer. xxxi. 15–17.

Disappointed in the fidelity of the royal house of Judah, Nebuchadrezzar had not attempted to place another of them on the throne. He appointed Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, his satrap (*pakîd*) over the poor remnant who were left in the land. In this appointment we probably trace the influence of Jeremiah. There is no one whom Nebuchadrezzar would have been so likely to consult. Gedaliah was the son of the prophet's old protector,[1] and his grandfather Shaphan had been a trusted minister of Josiah. He thoroughly justified the confidence reposed in him, and under his wise and prosperous rule there seemed to be every prospect that there would be at least some pale gleam of returning prosperity. The Jews, who during the period of the siege had fled into all the neighbouring countries, no sooner heard of his viceroyalty than they came flocking back from Moab, and Ammon, and Edom. They found themselves, perhaps for the first time in their lives, in possession of large estates, from which the exiles of Babylon had been dispossessed; and favoured by an abundant harvest, "they gathered wine and summer fruits very much."[2]

Jerusalem—dismantled, defenceless, burnt—was no longer habitable. It was all but deserted, so that jackals and hyænas prowled even over the mountain of the Lord's House. All attempt to refortify it would have been regarded as rebellion, and such a mere "lodge in a garden of cucumbers" would have been useless to repress the marauding incursions of the envious Moabites and Edomites, who had looked on with shouts at the destruction of the city, and exulted when her

[1] Jer. xxvi. 24. [2] Jer. xl. 12.

carved work was broken down with axes and hammers. Gedaliah therefore fixed his headquarters at Mizpah, about six miles north of Jerusalem, of which the lofty eminence could be easily secured.[1] It was the watch-tower from which Titus caught his first glimpses of the Holy City, as many a traveller does to this day, and the point at which Richard I. averted his eyes with tears, saying that he was unworthy to look upon the city which he was unable to save. Here, then, Gedaliah lived, urging upon his subjects the policy which his friend and adviser Jeremiah had always supported, and promising them quietness and peace if they would but accept the logic of circumstances—if they would bow to the inevitable, and frankly acknowledge the suzerainty of Nebuchadrezzar. It was perhaps as a pledge of more independence in better days to come that Nebuzaradan had left Gedaliah in charge of the young daughters of King Zedekiah, who had with them some of their eunuch-attendants. As that unfortunate monarch was only thirty-two years old when he was blinded and carried away, the princesses were probably young girls; and it has been conjectured that it was part of the Chaldæan king's plan for the future that in time Gedaliah should be permitted to marry one of them, and re-establish at least a collateral branch of the old royal house of David.

How long this respite continued we do not know. The language of Jeremiah xxxix 2, xli. 1, compared with 2 Kings xxv. 8, might seem to imply that it only lasted two months. But since Jeremiah does not mention the year in xli. 1, and as there seems to

[1] Some identify it with *Shaphat*, a mile from Jerusalem

have been yet another deportation of Jews by Nebuchadrezzar five years latter (Jer. lii. 30), which may have been in revenge for the murder of his satrap, some have supposed that Gedaliah's rule lasted four years. All is uncertain, and the latter passage is of doubtful authenticity; but it is at least possible that the vengeful atrocity committed by Ishmael followed almost immediately after the Chaldæan forces were well out of sight. Respecting these last days of Jewish independence, "History, leaning semisomnous on her pyramid, muttereth something, but we know not what it is."

However this may be, there seem to have been guerilla bands wandering through the country, partly to get what they could, and partly to watch against Bedouin marauders. Johanan, the son of Kareah, who was one of the chief captains among them,[1] came with others to Gedaliah, and warned him that Baalis, King of Ammon, was intriguing against him, and trying to induce a certain Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama—who, in some way unknown to us, represented, perhaps on the female side, the seed royal[2]—to come and murder him. Gedaliah was of a fine, unsuspicious temperament, and with rash generosity he refused to believe in the existence of a plot so ruinous and so useless. Astonished at his noble incredulity, Johanan then had a secret interview with him, and offered to murder Ishmael so secretly that no one should know of it. "Why," he asked, "should this man be suffered to ruin everything, and

[1] They are called *sari* ("princes").

[2] There is no Elishama in the royal genealogy, except a son of David. Ishmael may have been the son or grandson of some Ammonite princess. An Elishama was scribe of Jehoiakim (Jer. xxxvi. 12).

cause the final scattering of even the struggling handful of colonists at Mizpah and in Judah?" Gedaliah forbad his intervention. "Thou shalt not do this," he said: "thou speakest falsely of Ishmael."

But Johanan's story was only too true. Shortly afterwards, Ishmael, with ten confederates,[1] came to visit Gedaliah at Mizpah, perhaps on the pretext of seeing his kinswomen, the daughters of Zedekiah. Gedaliah welcomed this ambitious villain and his murderous accomplices with open-handed hospitality. He invited them all to a banquet in the fort of Mizpah; and after eating salt with him, Ishmael and his bravoes first murdered him, and then put promiscuously to the sword his soldiers, and the Chaldæans who had been left to look after him.[2] The gates of the fort were closed, and the bodies were flung into a deep well or tank,[3] which had been constructed by Asa in the middle of the courtyard, when he was fortifying Mizpah against the attacks of Baasha, King of Israel.

For two days there was an unbroken silence, and the peasants at Mizpah remained unaware of the dreadful tragedy. On the third day a sad procession was seen wending its way up the heights. There were scattered Jews in Shiloh and Samaria who still remembered Zion; and eighty pilgrims, weeping as they went, came with shaven beards and rent garments to bring a *minchah* and incense to the ruined shrine at Jerusalem. In the depth of their woe they had even violated a law (Lev. xix. 28, xxi. 5), of which they were perhaps

[1] The Hebrew text calls these ten ruffians *rabbi hammelech*, "chief officers of the king" of Ammon.

[2] Josephus records or conjectures that the governor was overpowered by wine, and had sunk into slumber (*Antt.*, X. ix. 2).

[3] In Jer. xli. 9, for "because of Gedaliah," the better reading is "was a great pit" (LXX., φρέαρ μέγα).

unaware, by cutting themselves in sign of their misery. Mizpah would be their last halting-place on the way to Jerusalem; and the hypocrite Ishmael came out to them with an invitation to share the hospitality of the murdered satrap. No sooner had the gate of the charnel-house closed upon them,[1] than Ishmael and his ten ruffians began to murder this unoffending company. Crimes more aimless and more brutal than those committed by this infinitely degenerate scion of the royal house it is impossible to conceive. The place swam with blood. The story "reads almost like a page from the annals of the Indian Mutiny." Seventy of the wretched pilgrims had been butchered and flung into the tank, which must have been choked with corpses, like the fatal well at Cawnpore,[2] when the ten survivors pleaded for their lives by telling Ishmael that they had large treasures of country produce stored in hidden places, which should be at his disposal if he would spare them.[3]

As it was useless to make any further attempt to conceal his atrocities, Ishmael now took the young princesses and the inhabitants of Mizpah with him, and tried to make good his escape to his patron the King of Ammon. But the watchful eye of Johanan, the son of Kareah, had been upon him, and assembling his band he went in swift pursuit. Ishmael had got no farther than the Pool of Gibeon, when Johanan

[1] Ishmael—a marvel of craft and villainy—put into practice the same stratagem which on a larger scale was employed by Mohammed Ali in his massacre of the Mamelukes at Cairo in 1806 (Grove, *s.v. Bibl. Dict.*). For "the midst of the city" (Jer. xli. 7), we ought to read "courtyard," as in Josephus.

[2] Comp. Jehu's treatment of the family of Ahaziah (2 Kings x. 14).

[3] The dark deed is still commemorated by a Jewish fast, as in the days of Zechariah (Zech. vii. 3–5, viii. 19).

overtook him, to the intense joy of the prisoners. A scuffle ensued; but Ishmael and eight of his blood-stained desperadoes unhappily managed to make good their escape to the Ammonites. The wretch vanishes into the darkness, and we hear of him no more.

Even now the circumstances were desperate. Nebuchadrezzar could not in honour overlook the frustration of all his plans, and the murder, not only of his viceroy, but even of his Chaldæan commissioners. He would not be likely to accept any excuses. No course seemed open but that of flight. There was no temptation to return to Mizpah with its frightful memories and its corpse-choked tank. From Gibeon the survivors made their way to Bethlehem, which lay on the road to Egypt, and where they could be sheltered in the caravanserai of Chimham. Many Jews had already taken refuge in Egypt. Colonies of them were living in Pathros, and at Migdol and Noph, under the kindly protection of Pharaoh Hophrah. Would it not be well to join them?

In utter perplexity Johanan and the other captains and all the people came to Jeremiah. How he had escaped the massacre at Mizpah we do not know; but now he seemed to be the only man left in whose prophetic guidance they could confide. They entreated him with pathetic earnestness to show them the will of Jehovah; and he promised to pray for insight, while they pledged themselves to obey implicitly his directions.

The anguish and vacillation of the prophet's mind is shown by the fact that for ten whole days no light came to him. It seemed as if Judah was under an irrevocable curse. Whither could they return? What temptation was there to return? Did not return mean

fresh intolerable miseries? Would they not be torn tc pieces by the robber bands from across the Jordan? And what could be the end of it but another deportation to Babylon, with perhaps further massacre and starvation?

All the arguments seemed against this course; and he could see very clearly that it would be against all the wishes of the down-trodden fugitives, who longed for Egypt, "where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread."

Yet Jeremiah could only give them the message which he believed to represent the will of God. He bade them return. He assured them that they need have no fear of the King of Babylon, and that God would bless them; whereas if they went to Egypt, they would die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence. At the same time—doomed always to thwart the hopes of the multitude—he reproved the hypocrisy which had sent them to ask God's will when they never intended to do anything but follow their own.

Then their anger broke out against him. He was, as always, the prophet of evil, and they held him more than half responsible for being the *cause* of the ruin which he invariably predicted. Johanan and "all the proud men" (*zēdîm*) gave him the lie. They told him that the source of his prophesy was not Jehovah, but the meddling and pernicious Baruch. Perhaps some of them may have remembered the words of Isaiah, that a day should come when five cities, of which one should be called Kir-Cheres ("the City of Destruction") —a play on the name Kir-Heres, "the City of the Sun," On or Heliopolis—should speak the language of Canaan and swear by the Lord of hosts, and there should be an altar in the land of Egypt and a *matstsebah* at its

border in witness to Jehovah, and that though Egypt should be smitten she should also be healed.[1]

So they settled to go to Egypt; and taking with them Jeremiah, and Baruch, and the king's daughters, and all the remnant, they made their way to Tahpanhes or Daphne,[2] an advanced post to guard the road to Syria. Mr. Flinders Petrie in 1886 discovered the site of the city at Tel Defenneh, and the ruins of the very palace which Pharaoh Hophrah placed at the disposal of the daughters of his ally Zedekiah. It is still known by the name of "The Castle of the Jew's Daughters"—*El Kasr el Bint el Jehudi*.[3]

In front of this palace was an elevated platform (*mastaba*) of brick, which still remains. In this brickwork Jeremiah was bidden by the word of Jehovah to place great stones, and to declare that on that very platform, over those very stones, Nebuchadrezzar should pitch his royal tent, when he came to wrap himself in the land of Egypt, as a shepherd wraps himself in his garment, and to burn the pillars of Heliopolis with fire.[4]

Jeremiah still had to face stormy times. At some great festival assembly at Tahpanhes he bitterly reproached the exiled Jews for their idolatries. He was extremely indignant with the women who burned incense to the Queen of Heaven. The multitude, and especially the women, openly defied him. "We will not hearken

[1] Isa. xix. 18–22.

[2] Jer. ii. 16, xliv. 1; Ezek. xxx. 18; Jer. xliii. 7, xlvi. 14; Herod., ii. 30.

[3] Fl. Petrie, *Memoir on Tanis* (Egypt. Explor. Fund, 4th memoir), 1888.

[4] Jer. xliii. 13, Beth-shemesh. Only one pillar of the Temple of the Sun is now standing. It is said to be four thousand years old. It is certain that Nebuchadrezzar invaded Egypt and defeated Amasis, the son of Hophrah, B.C. 565, reducing Egypt to "the basest of kingdoms" (Ezek. xxix. 14, 15). Three of Nebuchadrezzar's terra-cotta cylinders have been found at Tahpanhes.

to thee," they said. "We will continue to burn incense, and offer offerings to the Queen of Heaven, *as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem*; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. It is only since we have left off making cakes for her and honouring her that we have suffered hunger and desolation; and our husbands were always well aware of our proceedings."

Never was there a more defiantly ostentatious revolt against God and against His prophet! Remonstrance seemed hopeless. What could Jeremiah do but menace them with the wrath of Heaven, and tell them that in sign of the truth of his words the fate of Pharaoh Hophrah should be the same as the fate of Zedekiah, King of Judah, and should be inflicted by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar.[1]

So on the colony of fugitives the curtain of revelation rushes down in storm. The prophet went on the troubled path which, if tradition be true, led him at last to martyrdom. He is said to have been stoned by his infuriated fellow-exiles. But his name lived in the memory of his people. It was he (they believed) who had hidden from the Chaldæans the Ark and the sacred fire, and some day he should return to reveal the place of their concealment.[2] When Christ asked His disciples six hundred years later, "Whom say the people that I am?" one of the answers was, "Some say Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He became, so

[1] How far the prophecy was fulfilled we do not know. Assyrian and Egyptian fragments of record show that in the thirty-seventh year of his reign Nebuchadrezzar invaded Egypt and advanced to Syene (Ezek. xxix. 10).

[2] 2 Macc. ii. 1–8; comp. xv. 13–16. The tradition is singular when we recall the small store which Jeremiah set by the Ark (Jer. iii. 16).

to speak, the guardian saint of the land in which he had suffered such cruel persecutions.

But the historian of the Kings does not like to leave the close of his story in unbroken gloom. He wrote during the Exile. He has narrated with tears the sad fate of Jehoiachin; and though he does not care to dwell on the Exile itself, he is glad to narrate one touch of kindness on the part of the King of Babylon, which he doubtless regarded as a pledge of mercies yet to come. Twenty-six years had elapsed since the capture of Jerusalem, and thirty-seven since the captivity of the exiled king, when Evil-Merodach, the son and successor of Nebuchadrezzar, took pity on the imprisoned heir of the House of David.[1] He took Jehoiachin from his dungeon, changed his garments, spoke words of encouragement to him, gave him a place at his own table,[2] assigned to him a regular allowance from his own banquet,[3] and set his throne above the throne of all the other captive kings who were with him in Babylon. It might seem a trivial act of mercy, yet the Jews remembered in their records the very day of the month on which it had taken place, because they regarded it as a break in the clouds which overshadowed them—as "the first gleam of heaven's amber in the Eastern grey."

[1] Evil-Merodach (Avil-Marduk, "Man of Merodach") only reigned two years, and was then murdered by his brother-in-law Neriglissar (Berosus *ap.* Jos.: comp. *Ap.*, i. 20). The Rabbis have a story—perhaps founded on that of Gaius and Agrippa I.—that Evil-Merodach had been imprisoned by his father for wishing his death, and in prison formed a friendship for Jehoiachin.

[2] "Lifted up his head." Comp. Gen. xl. 13, 20.

[3] To be thus ὁμοτράπεζος, or σύσσιτος, of the king was a high honour (Herod., iii. 13, v. 24. Comp. Judg. i. 7; 2 Sam. ix. 13, etc.).

EPILOGUE

"On Jordan's banks the Arab's camels stray,
On Zion's hills the False One's votaries pray,
The Baal-adorer bows on Sinai's steep;
Yet there—e'en there—O God, Thy thunders sleep."

BYRON.

"God, Thou art Love: I build my faith on that."

BROWNING.

BEFORE concluding I should like to add a few words (1) on what some may regard as the too favourable attitude towards what is called the "Higher Criticism" adopted in this book; and (2) on the deep, essential, eternal lessons which we have found in chapter after chapter of it.

1. As regards the first, I need only say that the one thing I seek, the sole thing I care for, is Truth,—truth, not tradition. Even St. Cyprian, devoted as he was to custom and tradition, warns us that "Custom without Truth is only antiquated error," and that what we believe must be established by reason, not prescribed by tradition.

And it cannot be laid down too clearly that the old view of Inspiration—which defined it as consisting in verbal dictation, which made the sacred writers "not only the penmen but the pens of the Holy Spirit,"

and which spoke of every sentence, word, syllable, and every letter of Scripture as Divine and infallible—was a dangerous and absolute falsity, and that any attempt in these days to enforce it as binding on the intellect and conscience of mankind could only lead to the utter shipwreck of all sincere and reasonable religion. "Not needlessly," says the learned author of *Italy and her Invaders*—himself an able opponent of many modern conclusions on the subject—"should I wish to shake even that faith which practically believes that the whole Bible, exactly in its present shape, yes, almost the English Bible just as we have it, came straight down from heaven. But we do want to get away from all mere theories as to the way in which God *might* have revealed Himself, and to learn as much as we can of the way in which He *has* revealed Himself in actual fact, and in real human lives." [1]

To do this has been one of my objects in this volume, and in the preceding volume on the First Book of Kings.

2. We have now only to cast one last glance on this book, and on the lessons which it is meant to teach.

Consider, first, its deep and varied interest. It has the combined value of History and of Biography; and, in dealing with both, its aim is to pass over all minor and earthly details, and to show the method of God's dealings both with nations and with the individual soul.

If we look at the book only as a History, it shows us in the briefest possible compass a series of

[1] T. Hodgkin, *Friends' Quarterly*, September 1893, p. 401.

national events of the greatest importance in the annals of mankind. We become witnesses of the fierce occasional struggles between Israel and Judah, and of the constant warfare of both with those wild surrounding nations—the people of Moab, and of Edom, Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines also, and them that dwell at Tyre. We watch the indomitable resistance of Tyre to Assyria and Babylon. We see the Northern Kingdom of Israel rise into wealth, power, and luxury, only to sink into deep moral corruption, until, at last, the patience of God is exhausted, and He obliterates its very existence in an apparently final and irremediable overthrow. We witness the rise, culmination, and fall of Syria; the culmination and the crashing overthrow of Nineveh; the rise and the splendour of Babylon. We see the surging tide of the nomad Scythians and Cimmerians rise into flood and ebb away with spent and shallow waves. We see the petty fortress of Zion triumph in its defiance of the mighty hosts of Sennacherib because it is strong in reliance upon God, and we see it grow faithless to God until it succumbs to the captains of Nebuchadrezzar. Again and again we observe that the Almighty stills the raging of the sea, the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people.

The conviction is borne upon our soul with overwhelming power, as we read the pages of Amos, of Isaiah, and of Jeremiah, that, in spite of all their rage and tumult, and apparently irresistible dominance, God still sitteth above the water-floods, and God remaineth a King for ever.

Side by side with this spectacle of the dealing of God with nations, in which we see written in large letters, in characters of blood and of fire, His dealing with

guilty nations, we have abundantly in these chapters the narrower yet more intense interest which arises from the contemplation of human nature—one and the same in its general elements, but infinitely varied in its conditions—in the lives of individual men. It is revealed to us as in a picture—it is brought home to us, not by didactic inferences, but with the silent conviction which springs from the evidence of facts—that wealth is nothing, and rank nothing, and power nothing, but that the only thing of essential importance in human lives is whether a man does that which is good or that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. Good kings and bad kings pass before us; and though the best kings, like Hezekiah and Josiah, were no more free from earthly misfortune than are any of the saints of God—though Hezekiah had to suffer anguish and humiliation, and Josiah died in defeat on the battle-field, —yet we are irresistibly led to the belief: "Say ye of the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him; for the work of his hands shall be done to him."

We all have a guide in life. "We are not left to steer our course even by the stars, which the clouds of earth may dim. The ship has something on board which points towards the spiritual pole of the universe. I will not venture to call it an *infallible* guide. It wavers with tremulous sensitiveness; it may be deflected by disturbing influences; but still in the main it points with mysterious fidelity towards the pole of our spirits, even God. And what is this compass which we have for our guidance? Some would call it Conscience; but we call it by a holier name, and say that even as the needle is acted on by the magnetic

current, so our spiritual compass is the spirit of man acted on by the Spirit of the living and infinite God." The lesson of this book—of every book of biography or of history—is that men are noble and useful in proportion as they are true to that law of an enlightened conscience which represents to them the will and the voice of God.

Ahaziah and Jehoram of Judah, tainted with the blood of Jezebel, and perverted by the example of Ahab, live wretchedly, reign contemptibly, and perish miserably; while good Jehoshaphat and pious Josiah are richly blessed. In the vaunting elation of Amaziah, in the blood-stained ferocity of Jehu, in the ruthless examples of usurpation and murder set by king after king in Israel, and in the consequences which befell them, we see that "fruit is seed." Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, Athaliah, have to pay a terrible price for brief spells of troubled royalty; and the slow corruption and disintegration of the people reflects the vile example of their rulers. Like king, like people; like people, like priest. We look on at a succession of thrilling scenes —the horrors of beleaguered cities, the raptures of unexpected deliverance, the insulting vanities of triumph; we hear the wail that rises from long lines of fettered captives as they turn their backs weeping upon their native land. And we are told "strange stories of the deaths of kings." We see the King of Moab sacrificing his eldest son to Chemosh upon the wall of Kir-Haraseth in the sight of three invading hosts. We shudder to think of Ahaz and Manasseh passing their children through the fire before the grim bull-headed monster in the valley of the children of Hinnom. We see the two ghastly piles of the heads of young princes on either side the gates of Jezreel. We see Jehu driving

his fierce chariot over the body of the painted Tyrian Queen. We catch a glimpse of the sackcloth under the purple of the King of Israel as he rends his clothes at the horrible cry of mothers who have devoured their babes. We see the child Joash standing with the high priest in the Temple amid the blast of trumpets, while the alien murderess is pushed out and hewn to the ground. We see Manasseh dragged with hooks to Babylon. We watch the haggard face of the miserable Zedekiah as his sons are slaughtered before the eyes which thenceforth are blinded for evermore. We burn with indignation to see the villain Ishmael close with corpses the well of Mizpah. But even when the phantasmagoria seems most appalling and most bloody, we watch the Day-star from on high begin to shed its glory over the grey east. In due time that Day-star was to rise in men's hearts and on the world, with healing in His wings; and we feel that somehow, beyond the smoke and stir of earth's anguish,

> "God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world."

And like a Greek chorus amid the agonies of destiny stand the prophets, those clearest and greatest of moral teachers. They, in spite of their holiness and faithfulness, are not exempt from the calamities of life. Amos was insulted and expelled by the high priest of Bethel; Urijah was martyred; Hosea's prophecy is one long and almost unbroken wail; Isaiah was mocked and slandered by the priests of Jerusalem, and, if the tradition be true, sawn asunder; Micah, though spared, prophesied under imminent peril; Jeremiah, saddest of mankind, type of the suffering servant of Jehovah, was smitten in the face by the priest Pashur, thrust

into the stocks for the general derision, flung into a deathful prison, let down into a miry well, hurried into exile, defied, denounced, insulted, at last in all probability martyred. Prophets in general were hated and disbelieved. They were the eternal antagonists of priests and mobs. With priests they had so little affinity, that when a prophet was born a priest, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he might count on the undying hatred and antagonism of his order. Priests, with scarcely an exception, under every erring or apostatising king, from Rehoboam to Ahaz, from Ahaz to Zedekiah, with a monotony of meanness, did nothing but acquiesce, careful mainly for their own rights and revenues; prophets did little but raise, against them and their party, an unavailing protest. When, in the days of the priest-regent Jehoiada, the priests had power, he had made a special ordinance that there should be overseers in the Temple whose function it should be to put in the stocks and the collar "every man that is mad, and that maketh himself a prophet";[1] and Shemaiah was quite indignant that there should be any delay in putting this convenient ordinance into force. Priests were chiefly absorbed in functions and futilities in the exact spirit of their guilty successors in the days of Christ. There could be little sympathy between them and the inspired messengers who spoke of such reliance on observances with almost passionate scorn, and to whom religion meant righteousness towards men and faith in the Living God.

This high lesson of Prophecy came into greater prominence with each succeeding generation. It had been taught by Amos, the first of the literary prophets,

[1] Jer. xxix. 25–27.

with emphatic distinctness. It was summarised by Hosea in words which our Saviour loved to quote: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It had been uttered by Micah in an outburst of splendid poetry which summed up all that God requires. It was reiterated in many forms by Isaiah and by Jeremiah in words of richer moral value than all that came from the teaching of the priestly functionaries from the days when Aaron seduced Israel with his golden calf till the days when Caiaphas and Annas goaded the multitude to prefer Barabbas to Jesus, and to shout of their Messiah, "Let Him be crucified."

It was the richest fruit which sprang from the long Divine discipline of the nation,—the knowledge that outward things are of no avail to save any man; that God requires righteousness, that God looketh at the heart.

And the prophets themselves had to learn by the irony of events that no suppression of local sanctuaries under Hezekiah, no multiplication of ceremonies and acceptance of Deuteronomic Codes under Josiah, were deep enough to change men's hearts. Isaiah, like Amos, dwells with anger on the reliance upon vain ritual, which is so cheap a substitute for genuine holiness; and Jeremiah, despairing utterly of that reformation under Josiah of which he had once felt hopeful, had to denounce the new reliance on the Temple and its sacrifices. He ultimately felt no confidence in anything except in a new covenant in which God Himself would write His law upon men's hearts, and all should know Him from the least even to the greatest.

But the History of Prophecy also in this epoch is

marked by events of world-wide importance. In the days of Isaiah we see the change of Israel from a nation into a church of the faithful, for which alone he has any permanent hope. In him, too, we hear the first distinct utterances of the final form in which should be fulfilled the Messianic hope. Under Jeremiah there was still further advance. He points, as Joel does, to the epoch of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and shows that God does not only deal with men as nations, or as churches, or even as families, but as beings with individual souls.

This and much besides we have seen in the foregoing pages, in which we have endeavoured to point the lessons of the Books of Kings. The one main lesson which the narrative is meant to teach is absolute faith and trust in God, as an anchor which holds amid the wildest storms of ruin, and of apparently final failure. Not until we have realised that truth can we hear the words of God, or see the vision of the Almighty. When we have learnt it, we shall not fear, though the hills be moved and carried into the midst of the sea. It is the lesson which gets behind the meaning of failure, and raises us to a height from which we can look down on prosperity as a thing which—except in fatally delusive semblance—cannot exist apart from righteousness and faith. This is the lesson of life, the lesson of lessons. If it does not solve all problems on their intellectual side, it scatters all perplexities in the spiritual sphere. It shows us that duty is the reward of duty, and that there can be no happiness save for those who have learnt that duty and blessedness are one. And thus even by this book of annals—annals of wild deeds and troubled times—we may be taught the truths which find their perfect illustration and proof in

the life and teaching of the Son of God. When those truths are our real possession, the work of life is done. Then

> "Vigour may fail the towering fantasy,
> But yet the Will rolls onward, like a wheel
> In even motion by the love impelled
> That moves the sun in heaven, and all the stars."

APPENDIX I

THE KINGS OF ASSYRIA, AND SOME OF THEIR INSCRIPTIONS.

DATES from the *Eponym Canon* and the Assyrian Monuments; Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions, and the Old Testament*, E. Tr., 1888, pp. 167-187.

B.C.

860.—Shalmaneser II.
854.—Battle of Karkar. War with *Ahab* and *Benhadad*.
842.—War with Hazael. Tribute of *Jehu*.
825.—Samsi-Ramman.[1]
812.—Ramman-Nirari.
783.—Shalmaneser III.
773.—Assur-dan III.
763.—June 15th. Eclipse of the Sun.
755.—Assur-Nirari.
745.—Tiglath-Pileser II.
742.—Azariah (Uzziah) heads a league of nineteen Hamathite districts against Assyria (?).
740.—Death of Uzziah (?).
738.—Tribute of Menahem, Rezin, and Hiram.
734.—Expedition to Palestine against Pekah. Tribute of Ahaz.
732.—Capture of Damascus. Death of Rezin. First actual collision between Israel and Assyria.
728.—Hoshea refuses tribute.
727.—Shalmaneser IV.
724.—Siege of Samaria begun.
722.—Sargon. Fall of Samaria.

[1] Up to the time of Tiglath-Pileser II., the Eponym Year (which is not here given) marks the second complete year of each king's reign.

B.C.

721.—Defeat of Merodach-Baladan.

720.—Battle of Raphia. Defeat of Sabaco, King of Egypt.

715.—Subjugated people deported to Samaria. Accession of Hezekiah.

711.—Capture of Ashdod.

707.—Building of great palace of Dur-Sarrukin.

709.—Sargon expels Merodach-Baladan, and becomes King of Babylon.

705.—Assassination (?) of Sargon.

705.—Sennacherib.

704.—Embassy of Merodach-Baladan to Hezekiah.

703.—Belibus made King of Babylon.

702.—Construction of the Bellino Cylinder.

721.—Siege of Ekron. Defeat of Egypt at Altaqu. Siege of Jerusalem. Campaign against Hezekiah and Tirhakah disastrously concluded at Pelusium and Jerusalem.

681.—Murder of Sennacherib.

681.—Esar-haddon.

676.—Manasseh pays tribute.

668.—Assur-bani-pal (Sardanapalus).

608.—Death of Josiah in the battle of Megiddo against Pharaoh Necho.

The dates and names of Assyrian kings as given in *Records of the Past* (ii. 207, 208) do not exactly accord with these in all cases.

	B.C.
Tiglath-Pileser II.	950
Assur-dan II.	930
Rimmon-Nirari II.	911
Tiglath-Uras II.	889
Assur-natzu-pal	883
Shalmaneser II.	858
Assur-dain-pal (a rebel)	825
Samsi-Rimmon II.	823
Rimmon-Nirari III.	810
Shalmaneser III.	781
Assur-dan III.	771
Assur-Nirari	753
Tiglath-Pileser III. (Pul)	745

	B.C.
Shalmaneser IV. (an usurper)	727
Sargon (Jareb?) (usurper)	722
Sennacherib	705
Esar-haddon I.	681
Assur-bani-pal	668
* * * * *	
Destruction of Nineveh under Esar-haddon II., or Sarakos	606

INSCRIPTION OF SHALMANESER II. ON THE BLACK OBELISK IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM [1]

It begins with an invocation to the gods Rimmon, Adar, Merodach, Nergal, Beltis, Istar, and proceeds:—

"I am Shalmaneser, the strong king, king of all the four Zones of the Sun, the marcher over the whole world, who has laid his yoke upon all lands hostile to him, and has swept them like a whirlwind."

It tells of his campaigns against the Hittites etc., etc.

The allusion to Jehu runs as follows:—

"The tribute of Yahua, son of Khumri, silver, gold, bowls of gold, vessels of gold, goblets of gold, pitchers of gold, lead, sceptres for the king's hand, staves, I received."

This inscription is supplemented by another on a monolith found at Karkh, twenty miles from Diarbekr (*Records*, iii. 81-100), which mentions the battle of Karkar, with its slaughter of fourteen thousand of the enemy, among whom was Akkabhu Sirlai—*i.e.*, Ahab of Israel.

II

TIGLATH-PILESER II. (CIRC. B.C. 739)

In his Records he mentions no less than five Hebrew kings—Azariah, Jehoahaz (Ahaz), Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea—as well as Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, etc. His name perhaps means "He who puts his trust in Adar." See *Records of the*

[1] This Shalmaneser died about B.C. 825, after a reign of thirty-five years (Sayce in *Records of the Past*, v. 27-42; Oppert, *Hist. des Empires de Chaldée et d'Assyrie*; Ménant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, 1874).

Past, v. 45-52; Schrader, *Keilinschr.*, pp. 149-151; G. Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, pp. 254-287.

Unfortunately the inscriptions are very mutilated and fragmentary.

III

Our chief knowledge of SARGON is from the great inscription in the Palace of Khorsabad. It is translated by Prof. Dr. Jules Oppert, *Records of the Past*, ix. 1-21. The king's inscription at Bavian, north-east of Mosul, is in the same volume, pp. 21-28, translated by Dr. T. G. Pinches. See, too, *id.*, vii. 21-56, xi. 15-40.

The Khorsabad inscription has these passages:—

"The great gods have made me happy by the constancy of their affection; they have granted me the exercise of my sovereignty over all kings."

He says:—

"I besieged and occupied the town of Samaria; I took twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty of its inhabitants captive. I took from them fifty chariots, but left them the rest of their belongings. I placed my lieutenants over them; I renewed the obligations imposed upon them *by one of the kings who preceded me.*" [Tiglath-Pileser, whom Sargon does not choose to name.]

"Hanun, King of Gaza, and Sabaco, Sultan of Egypt, allied themselves at *Raphia* to oppose me. I put them to flight. Sabaco fled, and no one has seen any trace of him since. I imposed a tribute on Pharaoh, King of Egypt."

He tells us that he defeated the usurper Ilubid of Hamath, who had been a smith; burnt Karkar; and flayed Ilubid alive.

He defeated Azuri and Jaman of Ashdod, and his most persistent enemy, Merodach-Baladan, son of Jakin, King of Chaldæa.

He ends with a prayer that Assur may bless him.

IV

Bellino's Cylinder comprises the first two years of SENNACHERIB. It is translated by Mr. H. F. Talbot, *Records of the Past*, i. 22-32. It was published by Layard in the first volume of *British Museum Inscriptions*, pl. 63. The facsimile of it was made by Bellino.

It begins:—

"'SENNACHERIB, the great king, the powerful king, the king of Assyria, the king unrivalled, the pious monarch, the worshipper

of the great gods, . the noble warrior, the valiant hero, the first of all kings, the great punisher of unbelievers who are breakers of the holy festivals.

"Assur, my lord, has given me an unrivalled monarchy. Over all princes he has raised triumphantly my arms.

"In the beginning of my reign I defeated Marduk-Baladan, King of Babylon, and his allies the Elamites, in the plains near the city of Kish. He fled alone; he got into the marshes full of reeds and rushes, and so saved his life."

(He proceeds to narrate the spoiling of Marduk's camp, and his palace in Babylon, and how he carried off his wife, his harem, his nobles.)

We see here an illustration of the vaunting tones of this king which are so faithfully reproduced in 2 Kings xviii.

His Bull Inscription, chiefly relating to his defeats of Merodach-Baladan, is translated by Rev. J. M. Rodwell (*Records of the Past*, vii. 57-64).

V

The Taylor Cylinder, so called from its former possessor, is a hexagonal clay prism found at Nineveh in 1830, and now in the British Museum (translated by Mr. H. F. Talbot, *Records of the Past*, i. 33-53).

The first two campaigns of Sennacherib are related as on the Bellino Cylinder. The Taylor Cylinder narrates campaigns of his first eight years.

The story of the third campaign narrates the defeat of Elulæus, King of Sidon; the tribute of Menahem, King of Samaria; the defeat of Zidka, King of Askelon; the revolt of Ekron, which deposed the Assyrian vassal Padi, and sent him in iron chains to Hezekiah; the battle of Egypt and Ethiopia at Altaqu (Eltekon, Josh. xv. 59), and the capture of Timnath. Of Hezekiah the king says:—

"And Hezekiah, King of Judah, who had not bowed down at my feet, forty-six of his strong cities, castles, and smaller towns, with warlike engines, I captured; 200,500 people, small and great, male and female, horses, sheep, etc., without number, I carried off. Himself I shut up like a bird in a cage inside Jerusalem. Siege-towers against him I constructed. I gave his plundered cities to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. I diminished his kingdom; I augmented his tribute. The fearful splendour of my

majesty had overwhelmed him. The horsemen, soldiers, etc., which he had collected for the fortification of Jerusalem his royal city, now carried tribute, thirty talents of gold, eight hundred of silver, scarlet, embroidered woven cloth, large precious stones, ivory couches and thrones, skins, precious woods; his daughters, his harem, his male and female slaves, unto Nineveh, my royal city, after me he sent; and to pay tribute he sent his envoy."

He then narrates his fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh campaigns against Elam, etc. His eighth was against "the children of Babylon, wicked devils," etc. He ends by describing the splendour of the palace which he built.

VI

An inscription of ESAR-HADDON, found at Kouyunjik, now in the British Museum, mentions his receipt of the intelligence of his father's murder by his unnatural brothers, while he was commanding his father's army on the northern confines.

"From my heart I made a vow. My liver was inflamed with rage. Immediately I wrote letters, saying I assumed the sovereignty of my Father's House." He prayed to the gods and goddesses; they encouraged him, and in spite of a great snowstorm he reached Nineveh, and defeated his brother, because Istar stood by his side and said to their army, "An unsparing deity am I" (*Records of the Past*, iii. 100-108).

VII

A terra-cotta cylinder of ASSUR-BANI-PAL (the Sardanapalus of the Greeks) is now in the British Museum. It is translated by Mr. G. Smith, *Records of the Past*, i. 55-106, ix. 37-64; Oppert, *Mémoire sur les Rapports de l'Egypte et l'Assyrie*; and G. Smith, *Annals of Assur-bani-pal.*

Its most interesting parts relate to the campaign of his father Esar-haddon against Egypt, and how Tirhakah, King of Egypt and Ethiopia, reoccupied Memphis. He defeated the army of Tirhakah, who, to save his life, fled from Memphis to Thebes. The Assyrians then took Thebes, and restored Necho's father, Psamatik I., to Memphis and Sais, and other Egyptian kings, friends of Assyria, who had fled before Tirhakah. The kings, however, proved ungrateful, and made a league against him. He therefore threw them into fetters and had them brought to

Nineveh, but subsequently released Necho with splendid presents. Tirhakah fled to Ethiopia, where he "went to his place of night" —*i.e.*, died.

APPENDIX II

INSCRIPTION IN THE TUNNEL OF SILOAM

THE inscription of Siloam is the oldest known Hebrew inscription. "It is engraved on the rocky wall of the subterranean channel which conveys the water of the Virgin's Spring at Jerusalem into the Pool of Siloam. In the summer of 1880 one of the native pupils of Dr. Schick, a German architect, was playing with other lads in the Pool, and while wading up the subterranean channel slipped and fell into the water. On rising to the surface he noticed, in spite of the darkness, what looked like letters on the rock which formed the southern wall of the channel. Dr. Schick visited the spot, and found that an ancient inscription, concealed for the most part by the water, actually existed there." The level of the water was lowered, but the inscription had been partly filled up with a deposit of lime, and the first intelligible copy was made by Professor Sayce in February 1881, and six weeks later by Dr. Guthe. Professor Sayce had to sit for hours in the mud and water, working under masonry or earth. There can be little doubt that this work is alluded to in 2 Kings xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 30; Isa. viii. 6 ("the waters of Shiloah ["the tunnel"?] which flow softly").

The alphabet is that used by the prophets before the exile, somewhat like that on the Moabite Stone, and on early Israelitish and Jewish seals. The language is pure Hebrew, with only one unknown word—*zadah*, in line three: perhaps "excess" or "obstacle."

Professor Sayce thinks that it proves that "the City of David" (Zion) must have been on the southern hill, the so-called Ophel. If so, the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom must be the rubbish-choked Tyropœon, under which must be the tombs of the kings, and the relics of the Temple and Palace destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar.

The inscription is:—

"The excavation! Now this is the history of the excavation. While the excavators were lifting up the pick each towards his

neighbour, and while there were yet three cubits [to excavate], there was heard the voice of one man calling to his neighbour, for there was an excess in the rock on the right hand [and on the left ?]. And after that on the day of excavating, the excavators had struck pick against pick, one against another, the water flowed from the spring [*môtsâ*, "exit," 2 Chron. xxxii. 30] to the Pool" (that of Siloam, which therefore was the only one which then existed) "for twelve hundred cubits. And [part] of a cubit was the height of the rock over the head of the excavators" (Sayce, *Records of the Past*, i. 169-175).

The letters are on an artificial tablet cut in the wall of rock, nineteen feet from where the subterranean conduit opens on the Pool of Siloam, and on the right-hand side. The conduit is at first sixteen feet high, but lessens in one place to no more than two feet. It is, according to Captain Conder, seventeen hundred and eight yards long, but not in a straight line, as there are two *culs-de-sac*, caused by faulty engineering. The engineers, beginning, as at Mount Cenis, from opposite ends, intended to meet in the middle, but failed. The floor has been rounded to allow the water to flow more easily. It is a splendid piece of engineering for that age.

The Pool of Siloam is at the south-east end of a hill which lies to the south of the Temple hill: the Virgin's Fountain is on the opposite side of the hill, more to the north, and is the only natural spring or "Gihon" near Jerusalem, so that its water was of supreme importance. Being outside the city wall, a conduit was necessary. Hezekiah "stopped all the fountains" (2 Chron. xxxii. 4)—*i.e.*, concealed them. By providing a subterranean channel for them, he saved them from the enemy and secured the water-supply of the besieged city.

APPENDIX III

WAS THERE A GOLDEN CALF AT DAN?

THE question might seem absurd, but for its solution I must refer to my paper on the subject in the *Expositor* for October 1893.

The *sole* authorities for a calf at Dan are 1 Kings xii. 28-30; 2 Kings x. 29. If in the former passage we alter *one letter*, and read האפד (the "ephod") for האחד (the "one")—as Klostermann

suggests—we throw light on an obscure and perhaps corrupt passage. The allusion then would be to Micah's old idolatrous image (which *may* have been a calf) at Dan. The two words "and in Dan" in 2 Kings x. 29 may easily have been (as Klostermann thinks) an exegetical gloss added from the error of one letter in 1 Kings xii. 30.

Dan was a most unlikely place to select: for (1) It was a remote frontier town; and (2) there was no room, and no necessity there, for a new cultus beside the ancient one established some centuries earlier, and still served by priests who were direct lineal descendants of Moses (Judg. xviii. 30, 31).

This would further account for the absolute silence of prophets and historians about any golden calf at Dan; and it adds to the inherent probability, also supported by some evidence, that there were *two* cherubic calves at Bethel.

For further arguments I must refer to my paper.

APPENDIX IV

DATES OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH, AS GIVEN BY KITTEL AND OTHER MODERN CRITICS[1]

ISRAEL

	B.C.
Ahaziah	855—854
Jehoram	854—842
Jehu	842—814
Jehoahaz	814—797
Joash	797—781
Jeroboam II.	781—740
Zachariah	740
Shallum	740
Menahem	740—737
Pekahiah	737—735
Pekah	735—734
Hoshea	734—725

[1] Many of these dates can only be regarded as uncertain and approximate. Kamphausen dates the commencement of all the latter kings a year later (*Die Chronologie der hebräischen Könige*, Bonn, 1883).

JUDAH

	B.C.
Jehoram ben-Jehoshaphat	851—843
Ahaziah ben-Jehoram	843—842
Athaliah	842—836
Joash ben-Ahaziah	836—796
Amaziah	796—783
Amaziah-Uzziah	783—737
Jotham	737—735
Ahaz	735—715
Hezekiah	715—686
Manasseh	686—641
Amon	641—639
Josiah	639—608
Jehoahaz	608
Jehoiakim	608—597
Jehoiachin	597
Zedekiah	597—586